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Emmons

THE

WORKS

OF

NATHANAEL EMMONS, D. D.

LATE

PASTOR OF THE CHURCH IN FRANKLIN, MASS.

WITH

A MEMOIR OF HIS LIFE.

EDITED BY JACOB IDE, D. D.

VOL. II.

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VOLUME II.

SOCIAL AND CIVIL DUTIES.

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PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

SERMON I.

THE ORIGIN OF MANKIND.

Before 1786

And hath made of one blood all nations of men, for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the time before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation. — Acts xvii. 26.

It is the design of this discourse to trace the origin of mankind, and exhibit the evidences there are of their having sprung from but one stock. This is the subject introduced by the text. The truth of the declaration which it contains will appear, if we consider,

1. The great similarity which is visible among the various nations of the earth. Here many points of resemblance deserve particular notice.

The first is, that they all have the same exterior form. The nations of Europe, Asia, Africa, and America, bear a very great resemblance to each other in this respect. They have the same number of eyes and ears, the same number of hands and feet, and nearly the same shape, size, features and countenance. This similarity among all nations plainly indicates that they have sprung from one blood; for if they had originated from different sources, there is no doubt but they would have discovered it, by a greater diversity in their forms, features, and limbs.

All nations resemble each other in their mode of moving. They all walk erect. This is owing to nature, and not to habit or custom; for no nation has ever been discovered, however barbarous and uncivilized, who have walked in any other than an erect posture; which is a mode of walking peculiar to the human species, and which seems to point out their dignity and superiority above all other creatures that move upon the earth. Ovid, a heathen poet, takes notice of this peculiarity in his description of the creation of man. He says, "When other

animals look down towards the earth, man only is endowed with a countenance erected towards heaven, that he may contemplate on God, and behold the heaven from whence he originated."

All nations resemble each other in the use of speech, or power of articulation. Although every nation has a distinct language of their own, yet they all agree in this, that they have a language which can be written, spelt, and articulately pronounced. But none of the lower species have the power of speech or articulation. The sounds they make, by which they express their feelings, cannot be written, spelt, or articulately pronounced. Speech is a prerogative that all nations possess, by which they are able to express that brotherhood which subsists between them, by virtue of deriving their origin from one blood, or the same common stock. Indeed, naturalists tell us that no animals have organs fitted for speech or articulation, and that mankind resemble each other in this important respect, by the mere gift of nature.

All nations resemble one another in their intellectual powers and faculties. The most savage and uncultivated nations appear to possess the same native powers of the mind, that the most civilized and polished nations possess. The natives of Africa and America have discovered such ingenuity, taste, and learning in those branches of knowledge, which individuals among them have had opportunity to cultivate, that the natives of Europe and Asia have no reason to deny or be ashamed of their blood-relation to them. Nothing is wanting to raise the most stupid and ignorant people to a level with the most refined, but a proper culture of their minds. All nations are by nature very nearly equal, at least as equal as brethren of the same family commonly are; which is a strong evidence of their originating from the same common stock.

One nation resembles another in their moral dispositions, as well as their intellectual powers. They are all equally involved in the same corruption and depravity of heart. It is as true of nations as of individuals, that "they have all gone out of the way, there is none that doeth good, no, not one." It is true, indeed, that the same moral corruptions do not equally prevail among all nations. But there is no greater difference in their national vices, than what naturally results from their laws, education, employments and circumstances. And as these have varied from age to age, so the same nations have varied in their national criminality and guilt; which proves that the same native propensity to sin, equally possesses all nations at all times. This is not strange, if all nations have originated from the same corrupt fountain; but it is very

strange and unaccountable, on the supposition of their having different originals.

All nations resemble one another in their birth, growth, decay, and dissolution. They all come into the world in the same feeble and helpless condition. While infants they are wholly dependent on others for sustenance and protection. Their growth is very slow and gradual. They are many years in coming to maturity of size, strength, and activity. They are continually liable to fatal casualties and accidents. Or if they escape these, old age infallibly brings on a dissolution, and reduces them to the dust of death. Now since mankind resemble one another in so many important respects, it is natural to conclude, that they have derived their origin from one blood or common stock.

2. It will farther appear, that all nations have sprung from one and the same source, if we consider the ignorance in which they have generally been involved for many ages past. According to the account that ancient nations have given of themselves, they were once in a state of profound ignorance and barbarism. They had no written laws, nor civil compacts. Common usage or custom was their only rule in their civil and public concerns. And after they began to have some few laws, they were not written, but promulgated only by their bards or poets, who were their principal legislators. Nor were they less ignorant in arts, than in laws. The Egyptians, Persians, Phœnicians, Greeks, and several other nations, acknowledge that their ancestors were once without the use of fire. In consequence of this, they lived on raw flesh and the natural productions of the earth, having no household utensils by which they could dress their food. Not knowing the use of fire, they could neither refine brass nor iron, nor any other metals, nor make instruments to cultivate the earth. They could not raise grain, nor convert grain into meal, nor meal into bread. They were necessarily ignorant of all the useful arts. And they were still longer ignorant of the sciences. There were no regular physicians till after the time of Moses. The Egyptians had a custom of exposing the sick in places of public resort, where every person was required to acquaint himself with the situation of the sick, and tell what he knew to be the best remedies in such cases as appeared. The sciences of philosophy, astronomy, and even common arithmetic, were almost unknown. The most ancient nations could not count farther than ten; and this they learnt by counting their fingers. Hence all nations have counted by tens, for which no other reason appears, but their learning to enumerate by their fingers.

Having considered the ignorance of ancient nations, let us now consider the slow progress they have made in knowledge, learning and civilization. It is more than four thousand years since the Flood; and in all that time mankind have had opportunity of making improvements in all kinds of knowledge. But in all that long period they have brought neither laws nor government, neither arts nor sciences, very near to even human perfection. And many nations are still sunk in gross ignorance, notwithstanding the great and rapid advances some more modern nations have made in every species of the useful and elegant arts and sciences. This slow progress of knowledge in the world, affords a strong presumption that all nations have sprung from one single family. It must have been a work of time, and of great labor and difficulty, for mankind to spread over almost the whole surface of the earth. While any people are removing from place to place, and at great distances, they cannot cultivate the arts and sciences, but rather lose some of the knowledge they had before removing. And this will appear still more evident, if we consider the manner in which the knowledge of arts, laws, and government has spread among different parts of the world. No one nation can boast of having originated all their own arts and literature. These have been gradually handed down from age to age, from one nation to another. We derived our knowledge in letters, laws, and the arts of living, from Britain. Britain derived her knowledge from France and other nations. France, and indeed all Europe, derived their knowledge in the arts of life and literary improvements from Rome. The Romans we know derived their learning and refinement from Greece. And the Greeks derived much of their knowledge in the sciences and arts from the Phœnicians and Egyptians. Cadmus carried the alphabet from Phœnicia into Greece. In a word, letters, laws and arts may be traced up to the Chaldeans, Egyptians, Phœnicians, and Chinese. These undoubtedly were the first nations after the Flood, that formed themselves into a fixed and civilized state, and had leisure to make improvements in the arts of living. Now, if we put all these things together, we must see reason to conclude that all nations are but so many branches of one and the same family. Nor can we account for these things, if different nations are different species, and derive their origin from different sources. On this supposition, we might have expected that they would have differed much more from one another in their civil, literary and moral improvements, than we find they have done from time immemorial. If they had actually sprung from different originals, we might have expected that some would

have been vastly older than others; that some would have been acquainted with many things which others were totally ignorant of; that some would have originated all their own arts and sciences; and that some would have kept themselves entirely unconnected with the rest of the world. This leads me to observe,

3. That it is evident that all nations have originated from one blood, because the farther back we trace their origin, the more they become blended together and mixed into one. There is no nation but the Jews that appears unmixed. The English, French, Spaniards, Germans, and indeed all the nations of Europe are so blended, that none of them can trace out their national origin. Our nation will be soon mixed with almost every other nation on earth, and then it will be very difficult to trace the origin from whence we sprang. All tradition, monuments and history, unite in reducing all nations to one original family; nor is there a possibility of proving more than one original stock from whence all nations have proceeded. If different nations have originated from different sources, it is very strange that not one of them has been able to retain the knowledge of their distinct origin. But if they are all of one blood, it is not strange that every nation has lost the knowledge of the distinct branch of the great family from whence they descended. They separated gradually; sometimes of choice; sometimes for convenience; and sometimes of necessity, being captivated by a foreign nation, and necessarily mixed among them. It is by no means strange that they should not mark, nor remember the various means and causes of their gradual separations. But if different nations are different species, and have derived their origin from different sources, it is strange that they have not been able and disposed to retain the knowledge of their different originals, and that they are now obliged to acknowledge their relation to each other, and are incapable of disproving it. This amounts very nearly to demonstration, that they are all of one blood, and the offspring of one and the same family. Though nothing more needs to be said to establish this fact, yet since some have denied it and raised several objections against it, I will examine their weight and pertinency.

Some have said it was impossible for one family to spread over all the world, as we find the nations of the earth have done. To this I reply,

1. That it was easy for one family to scatter into any inhabitable parts of the earth where they could travel by land. The natives of this country can travel hundreds or thousands of miles, as individuals, or tribes, in a very short time. The

Goths and Vandals and other rude nations spread from the northern regions, and overran the Roman empire in a very few years. God divided the earth in the days of Peleg, and directed the descendants of Noah's three sons, Shem, Ham and Japheth, to disperse and go to the several and distant places of their destination. And though the children of Ham at first disobeyed the divine direction, yet they were afterwards compelled to disperse into distant parts of the world, like the other branches of Noah's family. After this first dispersion, it is easy to see that they might gradually spread into any parts of the world where they could go by land.

2. As to those nations who have inhabited Iceland and this western continent, we can conceive of various ways by which they came to these places. It has been conjectured, and not without some probability, that many islands were once connected by some small isthmus to the main land; and that this was the case in respect to the continents. If this be true, then the difficulty is entirely removed. But if this be not true, it is easy to suppose, that those on the continent could devise means to get to the nearest islands. And as navigation was early discovered by this means, they could get to remote islands and continents. The Phœnicians were the first nation that learned the art of navigation, and though they were destitute of the compass, yet they made long voyages, even to the pillars of Hercules at the Straits of Gibraltar. And though it is not probable that the ancient nations made long voyages in order to discover new islands or new countries; yet as they were very liable to be cast away, so it is very natural to suppose that they were often cast away, and thrown upon new islands, and even upon the coasts of this western continent; or at least upon some of the islands near it, from whence they could easily find their way to it. So that the peopling of America and the islands, affords no solid objection against the truth of fact, that all nations belong to one and the same large family.

Some nations presume to carry their antiquity several thousand years higher than others. The Babylonians, Egyptians and Chinese have been guilty of this folly, for folly it is.

1. Because they have no history or monuments to prove their great antiquity. Their state of ignorance can be clearly ascertained, and to have continued much longer than that of other nations. If they were really so much older than other nations, as they pretend to be, it might be expected that they could prove it by their great knowledge in their arts of living, and by authentic histories of their ancient greatness, glory and refinements. But this is out of their power.

2. It is folly for them to claim such high antiquity, since the most ancient and faithful historians bear full testimony to the contrary. And even their own historians never claimed such extraordinary antiquity, till after the days of Alexander, when learning had risen to a considerable height, and there was light enough to refute their vain pretensions.

It is farther objected that the great diversity in the customs, manners and complexions of different nations, is inconsistent with the supposition of their all descending from one original stock.

It is easy to answer that all these things may be accounted for by the different circumstances in which different nations have been placed, and the different climates in which they have lived. We know that different circumstances have great influence in forming the customs and manners, and even moral habits of mankind. It is natural to suppose that nations which have long been placed in different circumstances, should form different customs, manners, and habits, when left to the sole guidance of the dim light of nature. As to the diversity of complexions, this may be chiefly owing to the different climates in which they live. Warm climates have a tendency to darken the complexion, and cold climates to lighten the complexion. Besides, a multitude of accidental causes may concur to form this distinction among different nations. And after all, it is not, perhaps, more difficult to account for national differences in the respects that have been mentioned, than to account for family differences in the same respects. The truth of fact against which there can be no solid reasoning is, that all nations are of one blood, and descendants of one original stock.

1. If it be the truth of fact, that all nations are of one blood, then we may justly conclude, that the Bible is the word of God. This important truth is denied by multitudes among the different nations of the earth. They presume to call in question the inspiration and authenticity of the sacred scriptures, and represent them as a cunningly devised fable. But this one plain fact which has been, perhaps, sufficiently established, that all nations are of one blood, completely refutes, in various ways, all their subtile objections and sophistical reasonings against the Bible. The plain and simple fact, that all nations are of one blood, confirms the certainty of the principal facts and events, which we find related in the sacred scriptures. It confirms the plain and rational account, which the Bible gives of the first and great event, of the creation of the world. Some have denied that the world ever was created. The greatest pagan philosopher supposed the earth was eternal and

never had a beginning. Other philosophers have attempted to prove the absolute impossibility of creation; and asserted that it is a plain absurdity to suppose that God could produce something out of nothing, or produce something where nothing existed before. The same sentiment has been imbibed and propagated within less than thirty years past. But the Bible tells us that the world had a beginning, and that in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth, the sun, moon, and stars; that he separated the waters from the dry land, and formed the earth and the ocean; that he caused the earth to bring forth trees, fruits, plants, and herbs; that he created every beast of the field, every fowl of the air, every fish in the sea, and every monster in the deep; and that last of all, he formed one man and one woman, united them in a family state, and commanded them to multiply and replenish the earth. The Bible tells us that God thus created the whole world in six days; and this account must be true, if all nations are of one blood, and sprang from the same two parents. We cannot account for the existence and similarity of all nations, on any other supposition than this.

The Bible tells us, that after God had placed Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden, he gave them an express prohibition not to eat of the tree of life, which was in the midst of the garden, upon pain of death; but a subtile and malignant spirit in the form of a serpent, tempted them to eat of the forbidden tree, by which they forfeited the divine favor, and incurred the penalty of death, the proper wages of sin; and in consequence of the divine constitution, they hereby entailed sin and guilt on all their posterity. This is the scriptural account of the first apostacy of mankind, and the sin and misery which have flowed from it, among all the nations of the earth; and this is the only account of the universal depravity, which carries its own evidence of its truth and certainty. Though men have sought out many inventions to account for the universal depravity of mankind; yet the Bible gives the only rational account of it, that by one man's disobedience all were made sinners. This must be true, if all nations are of one blood, and derive their origin from one man.

The Bible tells us, that after mankind became universally corrupt, and had filled the earth with violence, God swept them all away by the flood, except one single family. The heathen have some dark traditions concerning this awful catastrophe, but they could never give any rational account of it. It cannot be credibly accounted for, but on the supposition, that all nations are of one blood, universally depraved, and universally deserve destruction. For if they were of different

origins, one might be guilty and not another, and it would be unjust to punish the innocent with the guilty. But if they were all of one origin and involved in the same moral corruption, God might justly involve them all in one general ruin.

If all nations are of one blood, this shows the impracticability of palming the Mosaic history upon the world, if it were not true. For all nations being of one family, they were naturally and necessarily connected, and must have had intercourse with one another, and could have contradicted and disproved the whole account of creation, if it had been false; and they would have had strong motives to do it; but they never attempted to refute it; and only exposed their ignorance by their vague and groundless conjectures concerning the primeval state of man.

If all nations are of one blood, then it is out of the power of Deists to disprove the inspiration and authority of the Bible. They have no monuments nor history so old as the Bible. Sanchoniathon is the oldest historian among profane authors, and only a few fragments of his writings have come down to us. But he wrote since Moses: so that the Old Testament is the oldest book in the world. The deists, therefore, have no histories to disprove the Mosaic history. Nor can they produce any ancient monuments, to show that different nations have sprung from different origins. But we have innumerable monuments, and the most ancient and authentic histories, to prove that all nations have sprung from one original source, agreeably to the Mosaic account of the creation, and of the dispersion of mankind after the Deluge. The burden of proof lies on those who deny divine revelation. It belongs to them to show how such a revelation as the Bible contains could come down to us, without divine inspiration. It carries history back to creation, of which there is no other history to be found. There is no profane history that gives any account of the first man, Adam, nor of his state of innocence, nor of his first apostacy. They have no histories more ancient, than those of the Babylonians and Egyptians. How then can they disprove the Mosaic account of the creation, of the state of innocence, of the state of man after the fall, of the Deluge, and of the general dispersion of mankind after the flood? They are all in the dark in respect to those great and interesting events, and must continue in the dark, while they deny the inspiration and authenticity of the Bible. This sacred volume is in our hands, and it is out of the power of infidels to take it out of our hands.

2. If all nations are of one blood, and belong to the same original family, then that notion of patriotism which is gener-

ally imbibed and admired, is false and unscriptural. One nation has no more right to seek its own public interests exclusively, or in opposition to the public interests of other nations, than one member of the same family has to seek his own private interest exclusively, or in opposition to the private interest of the rest of the family. It is, indeed, too common, that one member of the family seeks his own interest, in opposition to the interests of all the other members; but they never fail to complain of it as unkind and unjust; and every impartial person acquainted with the case, always forms, if he does not express, the same opinion. Brethren certainly ought to dwell together in union of affection, and of course, to seek each other's interest as their own. This is the law of love, which is founded in the reason of things, and which is sanctioned by divine authority. What is true, in respect to one branch of the large family of mankind, is equally true in respect to every branch of it, even the largest branches. All nations are morally bound to seek each other's interests so far as they are known, and to refrain from doing any thing which they deem to be injurious to them. To feel and act in this manner is true patriotism. But it is not the patriotism which ancient Greece and Rome practiced and applauded, nor that which modern France, Britain, America, and other nations generally practice and admire. It is a national maxim, to be lovers of their own selves, their own country, and their own interests exclusively, and in opposition to the interests of all other countries and of all other nations. The by-laws (if I may so call them) of every nation, are built on this false, selfish, and sinful principle. No such principle is inculcated, or allowed in the Bible. Nations are under the same moral and divine obligation to exercise a disinterested regard to one another, that brothers are to regard each other in a kind and disinterested manner; for they are all of one blood and brethren of the same family. But who would think in reading the history of nations, that they viewed one another as brethren, and bound to treat each other as such? It is shocking to read the history of the Jews, of the Babylonians, of the Romans, of the Greeks, of the French, of the English, and of the Americans. They have all been engaged in wars and fightings, and shed rivers of blood. Millions and millions have been slain by the sword, within a few years past, by those who call themselves christians. And they have all professed to act as patriots. All selfish, cruel, inhuman patriotism ought to be condemned, as totally contrary to the spirit of the gospel, and the filial relation that all nations bear to one another.

3. If all nations are of one blood and belong to the same

human family, then they have no right to enslave one another. All men have natural and unalienable rights, which never ought to be taken from them by force and violence. But all nations have been guilty of this cruel and inhuman practice of trading in the souls of men. This vile traffic has been carried on for ages, and is still carried on in the most cruel and barbarous manner. Notwithstanding the extensive diffusion of both civil and religious light, respecting this subject, christians as well as heathen nations persist in making, selling, buying and holding slaves. This is a crying sin among heathen nations, an aggravated sin among christian nations, and still more heinous among Americans, who are so tenacious of their own public and personal freedom. They seem to think, that they originated from a different and nobler stock than the Africans; and insist upon their right to make them slaves. One would think, that no man of sense and honesty would really maintain this absurd and unscriptural opinion. But many, very many men in the nation, who pride themselves for wealth, learning, and patriotism, are strong and powerful advocates for slavery, and carry their opinion into practice, by subjecting thousands and thousands of their African brethren to the meanest and most degrading servitude. This is a lamentation, and ought to be for a lamentation. It is a deep stain upon our national character, and nothing but repentance and reformation can wipe it off.

4. Since all nations are of one blood and brethren of the same large family, God has manifested peculiar care, wisdom, and kindness, in fixing the various places of their residence in various parts of the world, in the best manner, according to their relations to and connections with each other. God has not left the settlement of this world to mere chance or accident, but wisely fixed every nation in its proper place. "As he hath made of one blood all nations of men, so he hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation." God divided the earth in the days of Peleg among the three branches of Noah's family, and ordered them to go to the several places of their destination. He fixed his own people in the place he had before appointed for their habitation. "Thus saith the Lord, this is Jerusalem: I have set it in the midst of the nations and countries that are round about her." It was not a matter of indifference with God, where he should fix the bounds of the children of Israel, or those of any other nation. He has located every nation that has been, is now, or ever will be in the world, in the wisest and best manner to answer his own purposes. And as he fixed the bounds of their habitations, so he fixed their times. That is, the time when every

nation should rise or fall, or become mixed with any other nation. In a word, he appointed the times, when all the revolutions among the nations of the earth should take place. In these appointments, he has manifested peculiar care, wisdom, and kindness, in disposing of the large family of mankind. It requires great care, wisdom, and kindness in a parent, to dispose of his numerous family, in the wisest and best manner. It requires more care, wisdom, and kindness in a prince to dispose of his numerous subjects in the wisest and best manner. But it required far greater care, wisdom, and kindness in God, to settle the innumerable children of Adam in their proper places in this world. All the nations of the earth are under strong obligations of gratitude to God for determining their times and the bounds of their habitation. Though they cannot see why they are placed as they are, yet God knows why, and they have reason to be satisfied with the divine allotment. They may know that if they are really contented, it will eventually be for the glory of God, and their own good.

5. If God has made of one blood all the nations of the earth, and they are all brethren of the same family, then he has exercised his absolute sovereignty in a very striking manner, in the government of the world. He has made great and innumerable distinctions among the nations and inhabitants of the earth. How differently did he treat the three branches of Noah's family, causing them to separate far and wide from each other, and fixing the bounds of their habitation in very different parts of the earth? How differently did he treat Isaac and Ishmael, Jacob and Esau? How differently did he treat his own people, and all other nations? He has placed one nation in a warm and another in a cold country. He has placed one nation in a rich, and another in a poor, barren country. He has raised one nation to great power, opulence, and dignity, and reduced many other people to servitude, poverty and meanness. He has placed families and individuals in ten thousand different circumstances. He has governed the whole world and all the inhabitants of it, in a mysterious and incomprehensible manner. All things have come alike to all; there has been one event to the righteous and to the wicked. The race has not been to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor yet bread to the wise, nor riches to men of understanding, nor favor to men of skill; but to human view, time and chance has happened to them all. We cannot conceive how God could have made more or greater distinctions among men in this life, than he has made, or how he could have made greater or more visible displays of his sovereignty in governing one and the same large family. But still it is denied by

thousands, that God has a right to act as a sovereign in this world, or in the world to come. Surely the understandings of men are darkened by the blindness of the heart; otherwise they could not help seeing and realizing the sovereignty of God, which he has so visibly displayed, for the express purpose of making the inhabitants of the earth to know, that he is God. God is as clearly to be seen in this world, as he ever has been, or will be, in any other world. Angels now look into this world to see the bright displays of his sovereignty, and of all his other perfections. The light here shines in darkness, but the darkness comprehendeth it not. God is passing before nations and kingdoms, kings and princes, high and low, rich and poor, every day in his amiable and awful sovereignty, filling the hearts of some with joy, and wringing the hearts of others with sorrow. And it is impossible for any one of the human family to be happy in this world, or the next, without seeing and loving his sovereignty.

6. Has God made of one blood all nations of men, and have they been so slow in coming to their present state of knowledge, holiness and happiness? then we have ground to think, that the world will stand many centuries longer. The earth is far from being fully inhabited. There is room for a far wider spread of the human family over the four quarters of the globe. Their numbers may increase an hundred fold; their knowledge may increase with their numbers; and their holiness and happiness may increase in proportion to their numbers and knowledge. God has made men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and it will undoubtedly be covered with them for a thousand years at least. The earth will be filled with holiness and happiness, and the glory of God, as the waters cover the seas, and bear a lively resemblance to the world above. The great and glorious fruits of the sufferings and death of the divine Redeemer, will be astonishingly great in the eyes of the whole intelligent creation, when his kingdom shall come, and his will shall be done on earth, as it is in heaven.

7. Has God made of one blood all nations of men who now dwell on all the face of the earth, who have dwelt on the earth, and who will hereafter dwell on the earth? Then the whole family of Adam will be immensely numerous. If the seed of Abraham will be as the stars of heaven for multitude, what will be the seed of Adam? Their numbers will be beyond human calculation, if not beyond human conception. This immense family are to have one universal and solemn meeting. For, "when the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory. And before him shall be gathered all

nations; and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats." We shall all be placed in this solemn attitude on that great day, to hear our own doom, the doom of the whole human race, and of the whole intelligent creation. The division will be irreversible. The righteous shall go away into life eternal; but the wicked into everlasting punishment. "The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burnt up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness." Are we prepared to see what we must see; to hear what we must hear; and to be where we must be, to all eternity? We are upon trial, and the trial will soon close, in eternal joy or sorrow. Behold, now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation.

SERMON II.

DIGNITY OF MAN.

DONATION OF BOOKS, BY DR. FRANKLIN, 1786.

SHOW thyself a man. — 1 KINGS ii. 2.

DAVID closed the scene of life with that propriety of conduct, and that composure of mind, which at once displayed the beauty of religion and the dignity of human nature. When the time of his departure drew nigh he had nothing to do to prepare for death, but only, like other pious and illustrious patriarchs, to converse with his friends, and to give them his last and best advice. And as he had, some time before, committed to Solomon the care of his family and government of his kingdom; so he felt a strong and ardent desire that this beloved son, in whom he had reposed such important trusts, should appear with dignity, and act a noble and worthy part upon the stage of life. Accordingly he called him into his presence, and with equal solemnity and affection, addressed him in these memorable words: "I go the way of all the earth; be thou strong, therefore, and show thyself a man." This appellation sometimes signifies the dignity, and sometimes the meanness of our nature. Job makes use of it to express our meanness and turpitude in the sight of God. "How can man be justified with God? or how can he be clean that is born of a woman? Behold, even to the moon, and it shineth not, yea, the stars are not pure in his sight. How much less man that is a worm, and the Son of man which is a worm." But Isaiah employs this same appellative to represent the dignity of human nature, when he calls upon stupid idolaters to "remember this, and show themselves men." So here David, in his dying address to Solomon, "show thyself a man," evidently means to use the term in the best sense,

and to urge him to act up to the dignity of his nature, and the end of his being.

Agreeably therefore to the spirit and intention of the text, the subject which now properly lies before us, is the dignity of man. And I hope the observations which shall be made upon this subject, will do honor to our nature in one view, and pour contempt upon it in another, and so lead us all into a clear and just apprehension of ourselves, which is the most useful, as well as the most rare and high attainment in knowledge.

The dignity of man appears from his bearing the image of his Maker. After God had created the heavens and the earth, and furnished the world with a rich profusion of vegetive and sensitive natures, he was pleased to form a more noble and intelligent creature to bear his image, and to be the lord of this lower creation. "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." This allows us to say that man is the offspring of God, a ray from the fountain of light, a drop from the ocean of intelligence. Though man, since the fall, comes into the world destitute of the moral image of God, yet, in the very frame and constitution of his nature, he still bears the natural image of his Maker. His soul is a transcript of the natural perfections of the Deity. God is a spirit, and so is the soul of man; God is intelligence and activity, and so is the soul of man. In a word, man is the living image of the living God, in whom is displayed more of the divine nature and glory, than in all the works and creatures of God upon earth. Agreeably therefore to the dignity of his nature, God hath placed him at the head of the world, and given him the dominion over all his works. Hence says the Psalmist, "Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honor. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet; all sheep and oxen; yea, and the beasts of the field, the fowls of the air, and the fish of the sea." How wide is the kingdom of man! how numerous his subjects! how great his dignity!

God has, besides, enstamped a dignity upon man by giving him not only a rational, but an immortal existence. The soul, which is properly the man, shall survive the body and livefor ever. This might be argued from the nature, the capacity, and the desires of the human mind, and from the authority of the wiser heathens, who have generally supposed the soul to be a spiritual and immortal principle in man. But since the heathen moralists might derive their opinion from a higher source than

the light of nature, and since every created object necessarily and solely depends, for continued existence, upon the will of the Creator; we choose to rest the evidence of this point upon the authority of the sacred oracles. Here indeed we find the immortality of the soul sufficiently established. Solomon saith, "Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth?" And in another place, after describing the frailty and mortality of the body, he adds, "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it." Agreeably to this, our Lord declares that men are able to kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul. And God has told us that he will, at the last day, separate the righteous from the wicked, and fix the latter in a miserable, but the former in a blessed immortality. Hence immortality appears to be the common property and dignity of the human kind.

The creatures and objects with which we are now surrounded, have but a short and momentary being. One species of insects, we are told, begin and end their existence in twenty-four hours. Others live and flutter a few hours longer, and then drop into their primitive dust. The larger animals, which people the air, the earth and the sea, do, day after day, in a thick and constant succession, die and dissolve into their own elements. And even the whole material system will, after a few ages, either by the immediate hand of God, or by the gradual operation of the laws of nature, be rolled together as a scroll, and tumbled into one vast and promiscuous ruin. But we shall survive all these ruins and ravages of time, and live the constant spectators of the successive scenes of eternity. And this renders us infinitely superior, in point of dignity and importance, to all the objects and creatures whose existence expires with time.

The dignity of man also appears from the great attention and regard which God hath paid to him. God indeed takes care of all his creatures, and his tender mercies are over all his works: but man has always been the favorite child of Providence. God, before he brought him into being, provided a large and beautiful world for his habitation; and ever since the day of his creation, he has commanded all nature to contribute to his support and happiness. For his good, he has appointed the sun to rule the day, and the moon to rule the night. Into his bosom he has ordered the earth and the sea to pour all their rich and copious blessings. And for his use and comfort he has given the fowls of the mountains, the beasts of the forests, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. He has also

given his angels charge over him, to keep him in all his ways. Accordingly they have appeared from time to time, to instruct him in duty, to deliver him from danger, to bring him good tidings, to attend his dissolution, and to convey his departing spirit to the mansions of rest. But the most distinguishing and most astonishing display of the divine mercy, is the incarnation and death of the Son of God for the salvation of man. By the incarnation of Christ, our nature was united with the divine, and the dignity of man with the dignity of Christ. Hence all the sufferings, which Christ hath endured on earth, and all the honors, which he hath received in heaven, have displayed the dignity of man. And for the same reason, the dignity of man will be eternally rising, with the rising honor and dignity of Christ.

But we must farthermore observe, that the large and noble capacities of the human mind set the dignity of our nature in the clearest and strongest light. Let us therefore consider, in this place, several of these with particular attention.

First: Man hath a capacity for constant and perpetual progression in knowledge. Animals, indeed, appear to have some small degree of knowledge. "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib." But, as all the lower species are destitute of the power of reasoning, or the faculty of arranging and comparing their ideas; so they are totally incapable of enlarging their views, by intellectual improvements. The bee cannot improve her skill, nor the ant her prudence, by observation or study. All their knowledge is the mere gift of God, which he bestows upon them without any application or exertion of theirs.

But man is capable of improving in knowledge as long as he enjoys the means or materials of improvement. Indeed he has power to improve the smallest stock for ever. The faculty of reason, with which he is endowed, enables him to proceed from one degree of knowledge to another, in a constant and endless progression. The grounds of this are obvious. As a certain chain, or connection runs through all branches of knowledge; so the acquisition of one degree of knowledge facilitates the acquisition of another, and the more a man knows, the more he is capable of knowing. And, as all the powers and faculties of the mind brighten and expand by exercise; so a man's capacity for improvement increases, as the means and thirst for improvements increase. Accordingly the path of knowledge has resembled the path of the just, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day. One generation has been improving upon another, from age to age. And the improve-

ments and discoveries of the last and present century are truly surprising, and justify this grand and bold description :

> "Earth 's disembowelled ! measured are the skies !
> Stars are detected in their deep recess !
> Creation widens ! vanquished Nature yields !
> Her secrets are extorted ! art prevails !
> What monuments of genius, spirit, power ! "

But to show that reality in this case surpasses description, let me here mention Solomon, that great man, who is addressed in our text, and whose astonishing improvements in knowledge are recorded by the pen of inspiration, for the encouragement, as well as the instruction of all future ages. "And Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of the East country, and all the wisdom of Egypt. For he was wiser than all men: than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, and Chalcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol: and his fame was in all nations round about. And he spake three thousand proverbs, and his songs were a thousand and five. And he spake of trees, from the cedar-tree that is in Lebanon, even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall: he spake also of beasts, and of fowls, and of creeping things, and of fishes." The children of the East country were the Chaldeans, who, after the flood, made the first advances in astronomy, philosophy and other abstruse sciences. Next to them the Egyptians turned their attention to learning, and soon outrivalled all other nations in literary fame. Solomon therefore surpassed all the priests and poets, all the physicians and historians, and all the naturalists, philosophers, and astronomers of the two most ancient and most refined nations in the world. What an exalted idea does this exhibit of his wisdom and learning! And, as we must suppose that he made these improvements by reading, by observation, and study; so he stands a lasting ornament of human nature, and a perpetual monument of man's capacity for constant and endless advances in knowledge.

Secondly: Man hath a capacity for holiness as well as knowledge. The horse and mule, which have no understanding, and indeed all the lower animals, are utterly incapable of holiness: and even Omnipotence himself, to speak with reverence, cannot make them holy, without essentially altering the frame and constitution of their natures. But man is capable of holiness. His rational and moral faculties both capacitate and oblige him to be holy. His perception and volition, in connection with his reason and conscience, enable him to discern and feel the right and wrong of actions, and the beauty and deformity of characters. This renders him capable of

doing justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly with God. In a word, this renders him capable of every holy and virtuous affection. And as he is capable of growing in knowledge, so he is capable of growing in grace, in a constant and endless progression. What a dignity does this give to man, and how near does it place him to principalities and powers above! This leads me to observe,

Thirdly: That man hath a capacity for happiness, equal to his capacity for holiness and knowledge. Knowledge and holiness are the grand pillars which support all true and substantial happiness; which invariably rises or falls, accordingly as these are either stronger or weaker. Knowledge and holiness in the Deity are the source of all his happiness. Angels rise in felicity as they rise in holiness and knowledge. And saints here below grow in happiness as they grow in grace, and in the knowledge of holy and divine objects. Of this, we have a beautiful and striking instance in Solomon. View him at the dedication of the temple, when he fell upon his knees, and lifted up his hands and his heart to God, and poured into the ear of the Divine Majesty the voice of prayer and supplication, the voice of joy, of gratitude and praise. How near did he approach to God! How high did he rise in felicity! How much did he anticipate the joys of the blessed! And, if we now follow him to the temple above, where his views, his affections, and his joys are incessantly enlarging, we may form some faint conception of that amazing height to which man is capable of rising in pure and divine enjoyments. What a vessel of honor and dignity will man appear, when all his capacities for knowledge, for holiness, and for happiness, shall be completely filled! And to all this we must add,

Fourthly: That man hath a capacity for great and noble actions. Of this, we might find numerous monuments, if we had time to survey the land of Shinar, where Babel, Babylon, and Nineveh stood; or the land of Egypt, where so many grand and costly pyramids, tombs, and temples were erected; or the famous cities of Greece and of Rome, where the nobler efforts of human power and genius have been still more amply displayed. But the bounds of this discourse will allow us only to mention a few individuals of our race, who, by their great and noble exertions, have done honor to human nature. Noah, the second father of mankind, saved the world from total extinction. Joseph preserved two nations from temporal ruin. Moses delivered the people of God from the house of bondage, and led them through hosts of enemies, and seas of blood to the land of promise. David settled the kingdom of Israel in peace; and Solomon raised it to the summit

of national glory. Paul, in spite of pagan superstition, laws and learning, established christianity in the heathen world. Luther, by the tongue and pen of controversy, brought about a great and glorious revolution in the christian church. Newton, by his discoveries in the material, and Locke, by his discoveries in the intellectual world, have enlarged the boundaries of human knowledge, and of human happiness. And, to name no more, Franklin in the cabinet, and Washington in the field, have given independence and peace to America. But greater things than these remain to be done. The kingdom of antichrist is to be destroyed, the Mohammedans are to be subdued, the Jews are to be restored, the barbarous nations are to be civilized, the gospel is to be preached to all nations, and the whole face of things in this world is to be beautifully and gloriously changed. These things are to be done by the instrumentality of man. And by these, his capacity for great and noble actions will be still more illustriously displayed. Thus the image, which man bears of his Maker, the immortal spirit which resides within him, the distinguishing favors which he has received from the Father of mercies, and all his noble powers and faculties, unite to stamp a dignity upon his nature, and raise him high in the scale of being.

It now remains to make a few deductions from the subject, and apply it to the happy occasion of our present meeting.

First: We may justly infer from the nature and dignity of man, that we are under indispensable obligations to religion. Our moral obligations to religion are interwoven with the first principles of our nature. Our minds are so framed, that we are capable of knowing, of loving, and of serving our Creator; and this lays us under moral obligation to worship and obey him. Nor is there one of our race, who is incapable of feeling his moral obligations to religion. Only draw the character of the Supreme Being, and describe his power, wisdom, goodness, justice, and mercy, before the most ignorant and uncultivated savage; and, as soon as he understands the character of God, he will feel that he ought, that he is morally obliged to love and obey the great Parent of all. He will feel himself under the same moral obligation to pay religious homage to God, as to speak the truth, or to do justice to man. Every man in the world is capable of seeing that the worship of God is a reasonable service. Religion therefore takes its rise and obligation not from the laws of politicians, nor from the ignorance and superstition of priests; but from the immutable laws of nature, and the frame and constitution of the human mind. Hence it is utterly impossible for men wholly to eradicate from their minds all sense of moral obligation to religion, so long as they remain moral agents, and are possessed of common sense.

And, as man is formed for religion, so religion is the ornament and perfection of his nature. The man of religion is, in every supposable situation, the man of dignity. Pain, poverty, misfortune, sickness and death, may indeed veil, but they cannot destroy his dignity, which sometimes shines with more resplendent glory, under all these ills and clouds of life. While the soul is in health and prosperity; while the mind is warmed with holy and religious affections, the man appears with dignity, whether he is in pain, or in sickness, or even in the agonies of death. But atheism and infidelity, with their evil offspring, serve more than all other causes put together, to defile the nature, and sink the dignity of man. This appears from the black description, which the great apostle Paul has drawn of those nations, who liked not to retain God in their knowledge. "They changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and to four-footed beasts, and creeping things. They changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator. They dishonored their own bodies by the most mean and infamous vices. And they became of a reprobate mind, being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, covetousness, maliciousness, full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud; boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful." These are things which defile the nature, and degrade the dignity of man.

And these too are prejudicial to all learning and mental improvements. These debilitate the mind, cloud the imagination, and cramp all the nobler powers and faculties of the soul. These degraded the Alexanders, the Pompeys, and the Cæsars of the world, below the human kind. Had they been influenced by truly virtuous and religious motives, their great exertions would have done honor to human nature, but now they have stained the glory of all flesh. Nay, even a declension in religion hath left indelible stains upon the brightest characters recorded in sacred story; I mean Noah, David, and Solomon. Solomon was at the height of his glory, when at the height of religion; but when he declined into vice and idolatry, he fell into shame and disgrace, and lost that dignity, which had filled the world with his fame.

Now there is nothing that can wipe off from human nature these blemishes, and restore the dignity of man, but true religion. That charity which seeketh not her own, that love which is the fulfilling of the law, is the essence of religion and

the bond of perfection. This cures the mind of atheism, infidelity and vice; this fills the soul with noble views and sentiments, and directs all its powers and faculties to their proper use and end. This exalts the dignity of human nature, and spreads the greatest glory around any human character. This rendered Noah superior to Nimrod, Moses superior to Pharaoh, David superior to Saul, Solomon superior to Socrates, Daniel superior to the wise men of Babylon, and Paul superior to Plato, and all the sages of the pagan world. "Happy is the man who findeth religion; for the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies; and all the things thou canst desire, are not to be compared to her. Length of days are in her right hand; and in her left hand, riches and honor. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her; and happy is every one that retaineth her." Let us all then put on this rich and beautiful ornament, and show ourselves men.

Secondly: This subject may help us to ascertain the only proper and immutable boundaries of human knowledge. I mean such boundaries of our knowledge, as arise from the frame and constitution of our nature, and not from any particular state or stage of our existence. Our rational powers, it is often said, are limited, and therefore all our intellectual pursuits and improvements must be equally limited. This is doubtless true in a certain sense, but not in the sense in which it is generally understood. It appears from what has been observed in this discourse, concerning the powers and faculties of the human mind, that men are capable of making constant and eternal progression in knowledge. The only bounds therefore that can be set to their intellectual improvements, must be such as have respect to the kinds, and not the degrees of their knowledge. There are, indeed, certain kinds of knowledge, which men are totally incapable of understanding; but these are only such kinds of knowledge, as require more than created faculties to understand. For, whatever kinds of knowledge any created beings are capable of understanding, men are also capable of understanding, though with more difficulty and less rapidity. As Newton knew nothing, which any man is now incapable of knowing, in a certain time, and under certain circumstances; so there is nothing, which any intelligent creatures now know, that men are incapable of knowing, in a given time, and under proper advantages. The truth is, rationality is the same in all intelligent beings. Reason is the same thing in God, in angels, and in men. As men therefore

bear the image of God, in a point of rationality, so they possess all the rational powers and faculties, which bear any analogy to the divine intelligence; or which can be communicated to created beings. Accordingly angels are superior to men in the same sense, and perhaps nearly in the same degree, that Newton was superior to most of his own species. As Newton had no rational power or faculty peculiar to himself, so angels have no rational powers or faculties which are not common to all intelligent creatures. Every man therefore is capable of learning all that any man, or any intelligent creature has learned, or can learn. Hence the only natural and necessary distinction between angels and men, and between one man and another is this; that angels are capable of acquiring knowledge more easily and more swiftly than men; and some men are capable of acquiring knowledge more easily and more swiftly than others. And this difference between angels and men, and between man and man, to whatever cause it may be owing, will probably continue for ever; and for ever keep up a distinction in their knowledge and improvements for the time being.

Now this being a settled point, we may easily, perhaps, fix the proper boundaries of human knowledge, or determine the proper subjects of human inquiry. It is a caveat given to men, but especially to inquisitive men, not to pry into things above their measure. This caveat, undoubtedly, in some cases, may be very proper and necessary; but generally, I imagine, it is not only needless but absurd. For, unless men attempt to pry into things which surpass created powers and faculties, I do not know that they transgress the boundaries of human knowledge. There are some things, which, in a moment, we know cannot be understood by creatures. And there may be many others, which, by a little attention, we may perceive, come under the same predicament. All therefore that divines and metaphysicians, as well as philosophers have to do, in order to know where to begin, and where to end their researches, is only to determine whether or not, the proposed subjects require more than created abilities, to investigate them. If they do require more than created abilities, it is vain and absurd to proceed: but if they do not, we have the same grounds to proceed, that men have ever had, to attempt new discoveries.

Thirdly: This subject gives us reason to suppose, that men, in the present state, may carry their researches into the works of nature, much farther than they have ever yet carried them. The fields of science, though they have been long traversed by strong and inquisitive minds, are so spacious, that many parts remain yet undiscovered. There may be therefore room left

in divinity and metaphysics, as well as in philosophy and other sciences, to make large improvements. The large and growing capacities of men, and the great discoveries and improvements of the last and present century, give us grounds to hope, that human learning and knowledge will increase from generation to generation, through all the remaining periods of time. Men have the same encouragements now, that Bacon, Newton and Franklin had, to push their researches farther and farther into the works of nature. It is, therefore, a sentiment as groundless, as it is discouraging, which has been often flung out, that all the subjects of divinity, all of human inquiry, are nearly exhausted, and that no great discoveries or improvements, at this time of day, are either to be expected or attempted. The present generation have superior advantages, which, with capacities no more than equal to their fathers, may enable them to surpass all who have gone before them in the paths of science. Let this thought rouse their attention, and awaken their exertions, to show themselves men.

Fourthly: The observations, which have been made upon the nobler powers and capacities of the human mind, may embolden the sons of science to aim to be originals. They are strong enough to go alone, if they only have sufficient courage and resolution. They have the same capacities, and the same original sources of knowledge, that the ancients enjoyed. All men are as capable of thinking, of reasoning, and of judging for themselves in matters of learning, as in the common affairs and concerns of life. And would men of letters enjoy the pleasures of knowledge, and render themselves the most serviceable to the world, let them determine to think and judge for themselves. Their progress may perhaps, in this way, not be so rapid; yet it will be much more entertaining and useful. When I say their progress may not be so rapid, I mean with respect to those only, who possess moderate abilities; for as to those of superior powers, they will make much swifter progress by going alone out of the common, beaten track. The way to outstrip those who have gone before us, is not to tread in their steps, but to take a nearer course. What philosopher can expect to overtake Newton, by going over all the ground which he travelled? What divine can expect to come up with Mede, Baxter, or Edwards, while he pursues their path? Or what poet can hope to transcend Homer and Milton, so long as he sets up these men as the standards of perfection? If the moderns would only employ nature's powers, and converse freely and familiarly with nature's objects, they might rise above the ancients, and bear away the palm from all who have gone before them in the walks of science.

Fifthly: What has been said concerning the nature and dignity of man, shows us, that we are under indispensable obligations to cultivate and improve our minds in all the branches of human knowledge. All our natural powers are so many talents, which, in their own nature, lay us under moral obligations to improve them to the best advantage. Being men, we are obliged to act like men, and not like the horse or the mule which have no understanding. Besides, knowledge, next to religion, is the brightest ornament of human nature. Knowledge strengthens, enlarges, and polishes the human soul, and sets its beauty and dignity in the fairest light. Learning hath made astonishing distinctions among the different nations of the earth. Those nations, who have lived under the warm and enlightening beams of science, have appeared like a superior order of beings, in comparison with those, who have dragged out their lives under the cold and dark shades of ignorance. The Chaldeans and Egyptians, as well as the Greeks and Romans, while they cultivated the arts and sciences, far surpassed, in dignity and glory, all their ignorant and barbarous neighbors. Europe since the resurrection of letters in the sixteenth century, appears to be peopled with a superior species. And the present inhabitants of North America owe all their superiority to the Aboriginals, in point of dignity, to the cultivation of their minds in the civil and polite arts. Learning has also preserved the names, characters and mighty deeds of all ancient nations, from total oblivion. A few learned men in each nation, have done more to spread their national fame, than all their kings and heroes. The boasted glory of Britain is more to be ascribed to her Newtons, her Lockes, and her Addisons, than to all her kings, and fleets, and conquerors.

But the cultivation and improvement of the mind is more necessary for use than for ornament. We were made for usefulness and not for amusement. We were made to be the servants of God, and of each other. We were made to live an active, diligent, and useful life. As men, therefore, we cannot reach the end of our being, without cultivating all our mental powers in order to furnish ourselves for the most extensive service in our day and generation. Knowledge and learning are useful in every station; and in the higher and more important departments of life, they are absolutely and indispensably necessary.

Permit me now, therefore, my hearers, to suggest several things, which may serve to excite you to improve your minds in every branch of useful knowledge, which either your callings, or your circumstances require.

I am happy to congratulate you, my countrymen, that we

live in an age which is favorable to mental and literary improvements. In the present age, our country is in a medium between barbarity and refinement. In such an age, the minds of men are strong and vigorous, being neither enfeebled by luxury, nor shackled by authority. At such a happy period, we come upon the stage, with the fields of science before us opened but not explored. This should rouse our dormant faculties, and call up all our latent powers in the vigorous pursuit of knowledge. Those, who have gone before us in these pursuits, have only set us an example, and facilitated our progress, without damping our hopes, or forbidding our success.

Again: we live under that form of government, which has always been the friend of the muses, and parent and nurse of arts. It was while Greece and Rome were free, republican states, that learning there sprang up, flourished, and rose to its height; and enrolled their names in the annals of fame. Liberty, which is the birth-right of man, and congenial with his nature, ennobles and exalts the mind; inspires it with great and sublime sentiments; and at the same time invites and encourages its highest exertions, with hopes of success and the promises of reward. For, in free republics, where liberty is equally enjoyed, every man has weight and influence in proportion to his abilities, and a fair opportunity of rising by the dint of merit, to the first offices and honors of the state.

Another motive to improvement, you will allow me to say, may be taken from your past singular and laudable efforts to cultivate and diffuse useful knowledge in this place. It is now more than thirty years, since this single and then small congregation collected a very considerable parish library, in order to improve their minds in useful and divine knowledge. This was such an effort to promote mental improvements as, I imagine, cannot be easily found in this country. The benefit of this library you all have perhaps more or less experienced; and to its happy influence owe, in a measure, your general character as a religious and intelligent people. May this consideration have all its weight upon you, since our Lord hath said in the parable of the talents, "Whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance."

In this respect, how wonderful the smiles of Providence upon you! Whose heart doth not glow with gratitude for the auspicious occasion which hath now brought us together! How great our obligations to God for the unmerited and unexpected favor of a rich collection of books now received, as a mark of respect from the first literary character in America, his Excellency President Franklin! This well-chosen and very valuable library, while it sets the divine kindness in a high and en-

gaging light, lays you under the strongest ties of gratitude to improve the means of cultivating your minds for the service of God and of your fellow-men. Should you second the views of that great man, and build upon the broad foundation which he has generously laid, you may enjoy ample advantages, in point of books, to improve your mental powers, and furnish yourselves for usefulness in all your various stations and employments of life. Nor can you neglect or abuse such advantages, without drawing upon yourselves the reproach of the world, and what is infinitely more, the reproach of your own consciences. Be entreated then to improve to the best advantage, every price put into your hands to get wisdom.

There are three grand sources of knowledge before you, nature, men, and books. Attentively read each of these great volumes.

Read nature, which is truly an original author. King David, studying this large and instructive volume, which filled his mind with the noblest views and sentiments, broke forth in a rapture of praise, "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handy work. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge."

Read men, "for as in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man." This volume David perused and digested in the court and camp of Saul, where human nature, with and without a veil, was very visible to his critical and discerning eye.

But the design of this discourse more directly leads me to urge the reading of books in particular. These are a grand magazine of knowledge, and contain the learning and wisdom of ages. But you must know, that books are a peculiar fountain, from whence may be drawn either sweet waters or bitter, the waters of life, or the waters of death. For this reason, you will allow me here to advise you, to take heed how you read.

And in the first place, read with caution. A person may be undone by a single volume. Nothing contains such secret and fatal poison as books. Though they profess a kind and friendly intention, yet they often bite like a serpent and sting like an adder. Be careful what books you read. There are many, which the young and inexperienced, at least, should totally avoid. In this particular, if you are wise, and faithful to yourselves, you will endeavor to obtain and follow good advice.

Read with judgment. This is, in every view, indispensably necessary, in order to read to advantage. This will enable you to discover and ascertain the main object of your author, which will be a key to all he says in the various parts and

branches of his subject. This will help you to distinguish truth from error, good sentiments from bad, and sound reasoning and strict demonstration from mere conjectures and bold assertions. But if you read without judgment, you will be in danger of imbibing error as well as truth, of always believing the last author you read, and of never having any fixed and settled sentiment of your own.

Read for use and not for amusement. The time is worse than thrown away, which is spent in reading for amusement, without any particular end or object in view. We should be careful how we take up a book, especially if it be an entertaining one, with which we have no particular concern; for it will require a considerable effort of the mind to throw it aside, and if we do not throw it aside, it will steal away our time, and prevent our being better employed. Almost any book, if read for use, may be of advantage. We may read amusing and even corrupting books to advantage, if we read them in order to make a good use of them. The bee can suck honey from the same flowers from which other insects suck poison. But we may read all our lives to very little purpose, if we read every book which happens to fall in our way for amusement and not for use. We should always read with reference either to our own particular profession, or to the particular state and situation of our own minds. When we read with either of these objects in view, we shall be apt both to understand and digest what we read. There is great and singular advantage in reading proper books at a proper time, when we really stand in need of them. This is of the same happy tendency as eating and drinking at the proper seasons, when it serves to nourish and strengthen, instead of clogging and surfeiting the body.

Read with patience. Many authors are both prolix and obscure in conveying their ideas, and after all, have much more chaff than wheat in their writings. In reading such, we must go over a great deal of ground in order to reap a small harvest of ideas. It is difficult, however, for any man to treat any subject in a method entirely new. We must expect therefore to find many common and familiar thoughts in every author, which we must patiently read, if we would properly come at those which are more new, entertaining, and instructive. And for this reason it is generally best perhaps, if authors are of any tolerable size, to read them through, with patience and attention. This is but justice to them, and prudence to ourselves.

Read with confidence. In our first essays after knowledge, we are obliged, by the laws of our nature, to depend upon the assistance and instruction of others, and in consequence of this we are apt to feel, through life, too great a sense of our own

weakness and imbecility, and to despair of going a step farther than we are led. This however is very unfriendly to all improvement by reading. We ought therefore to feel that we are men, and place a proper degree of confidence in our own strength and judgment. We ought to fix it in our minds that we are capable of improvement. Such a confidence in ourselves as this, will embolden us to read with a view not only of understanding, but of improving upon the authors we read. Very few authors have exhausted the subjects upon which they have treated, and therefore have generally left us ample room to improve upon what they have written. And by reading with this view, if we fail of improving upon those we read, we shall however more clearly and fully understand their meaning, and more thoroughly make their ideas and sentiments our own.

Yet at the same time, every one should read with humility. Reading, more than any other method of improvement, is apt to puff up the mind with pride and self-conceit. For persons of reading are very prone to estimate their knowledge more according to the number of books which they have read, than according to the number of ideas which they have collected and digested; and so are ready to imagine, that they have engrossed to themselves all knowledge; though in reality they have not read enough to learn their own ignorance. This should teach us to take the poet's advice:

> "A little learning is a dangerous thing:
> Drink deep, or taste not the Piérian spring.
> There shallow draughts intoxicate the brain;
> And drinking largely sobers us again."

Nor is pedantry peculiar to those only, who begin to read and study late in life; for it is too often found among those who have enjoyed a regular and liberal education. Do not physicians and attorneys, by reading a few books in divinity, sometimes fancy themselves masters of that sacred and sublime science? And, on the other extreme, do not divines, by reading a few books in law and physic, sometimes fancy themselves masters of those two learned professions? But this is rank pedantry. It is an easy matter to gain a superficial acquaintance with the general objects of science; but it is a laborious task to acquire a deep and thorough acquaintance with any single branch of knowledge. It is easy to know something about every thing; but it is difficult to know every thing about any thing. If men of reading would collect the whole stock of their knowledge, and the whole force of their genius more to a point, and aim to be complete masters of their own professions, they would become at once much less

pedantic, and much more useful to the world. Many men of real abilities and learning have defeated their own usefulness by attempting to know and to do too much.

In the last place, read prayerfully. "If any of you lack wisdom," says the apostle, "let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him." This Solomon found to be true, by happy experience. "In Gibeon the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream by night; and God said, Ask what I shall give thee. And Solomon said, Thou hast showed unto thy servant David my father great mercy according as he walked before thee in truth, and in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart with thee; and thou hast kept for him this great kindness, that thou hast given him a son to sit on his throne, as it is this day. And now, O Lord my God, thou hast made thy servant king instead of David my father; and I am but a child; I know not how to go out or come in. And thy servant is in the midst of thy people which thou hast chosen; a great people that cannot be numbered nor counted for multitude. Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart; to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people? And the speech pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing. And God said unto him, because thou hast asked this thing, and hast not asked for thyself long life; neither hast asked riches for thyself, nor hast asked the life of thine enemies, but hast asked for thyself understanding to discern judgment; behold, I have done according to thy words: lo, I have given thee a wise and understanding heart." It was Dr. Doddridge, I think, who never used to take up a new book to read, without an ejaculatory prayer for divine influence and direction. This example is worthy of universal imitation. Let us therefore always accompany our essays after knowledge with an humble and prayerful spirit; and then we may hope to read and study with safety and success.

To all these directions I might now add diligence and perseverance, which always have had, and always will have a mighty influence in all the great things done by mankind. But I shall only add a few words to those who are very immediately and deeply interested in the things which have been said in this discourse.

This subject calls upon parents in particular, to show themselves men. You are, my respectable hearers, men in years; be men also in virtue, in religion, and in understanding. Let the dignity of man appear in all your conduct, and especially in your conduct towards your children. Let them see the dignity of human nature exemplified before their young and attentive minds. They are every day, and every hour, watch-

ing your conduct, and looking up to you for example and instruction. Take heed, that none of your words, none of your actions, none of your pursuits, be unworthy of men. But let all your conversation and behavior be such as your children may follow with propriety, with safety and dignity. And while you are teaching them by example, teach them also by precept. Give them good instruction; and for this purpose, provide them good instructers. These are of great importance to your children, whose progress in knowledge will generally bear a very exact proportion to the abilities and fidelity of their teachers. The education of children has always been an object of great attention among all wise nations, and especially among all wise and good parents. Let this then be the object of your attention. Consider the dignity of man. Consider the worth of the soul. Consider the rich and invaluable treasure put into your hands. Consider how much the dignity and happiness of your children, both in time and in eternity, depend upon your care and fidelity. And let the ties of nature, the authority of God, and your own solemn vows, engage you to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and to cultivate and embellish their opening minds in every branch of useful and ornamental knowledge. Admit not the thought, that such little, such weak, and to appearance such useless creatures, are of small importance; but remember that they are men in miniature, and may one day surprise the world with their dignity. When a young prince is born, all the kingdom feel the importance of his education, and are anxiously concerned to have the ablest instructers employed, to form him for great and noble actions. But you have more than princes, even young immortals, committed to your care, whose powers and capacities, whose dignity and importance, will astonish you at the great day, if not before. How happy will that parent be, who shall then be found to have been faithful to his children! "He will then join," as a celebrated writer observes, "his virtuous offspring in the habitations of the just, and there see them rise up and call him blessed. But if a parent neglects his duty to his children; if he sets before them an example of irreligion, and suffers them to grow up loose and unprincipled, he may expect that their blood will be required at his hands, and he should tremble to think of that period of retribution, when probably they will curse him for that negligence which has ruined them."

Finally: Let this subject awaken the attention of the youth to the dignity of their nature and the end of their being. My dear young friends, you will soon be called to act your various parts upon the stage of life. You are now the hope of your parents, of your pastors, and of your country. The eyes of

the world are upon you. Be entreated then to cultivate all your noble powers, and to show yourselves men, in whatever departments of life divine Providence shall place you. Piety and knowledge will prepare you for a useful and honorable life, and for a peaceful and triumphant death. Let these then be the supreme objects of your pursuit. Early consecrate all your time and all your talents to the service of God, and of your fellow-men. Seek for knowledge, as for silver, and search for it, as for hid treasures; and sacrifice every object which obstructs your pursuit of it. "Through desire a man having separated himself," says Solomon, "seeketh and intermeddleth with all wisdom." If you would make progress in learning, and rise to any distinguishing degrees of knowledge, you must separate yourselves from the vanities of youth, and devote those vacant hours to mental improvements, which too many of your age trifle away in folly and vice. In particular, flee youthful lusts, which war against both the body and the mind. Shun that all-devouring monster intemperance, by which so many strong minds have been cast down and destroyed. Avoid bad company and unmanly diversions, which are an inlet to every vice. Hold in steady contempt beaux and fops, those butterflies which live upon the filth and dregs of the earth. Diogenes, walking the streets of Athens at noon-day with a lantern in his hand, and being asked, as he intended to be, what he was searching after, tartly replied, "I am looking for men." A severe satire upon the luxury and effeminacy of that once manly and virtuous people. The dignity of man appears in the ornaments of the mind, and not in those of the body. Seek therefore to adorn and embellish your minds both by reading and observation, and your gifts and abilities will make room for you, and bring you before great men. You have peculiar advantages and encouragements to animate you to great and noble exertions. Therefore set your mark of intellectual attainments as high as you please, and, according to the common course of events, you will, by uniformity, diligence and perseverance, infallibly reach it. Your generous benefactor hath set you an example, as well as given you the means of intellectual improvements. That great man, in the morning of life, was surrounded with uncommon difficulties and embarrassments, but by the mere dint of genius and of application he surmounted every obstacle thrown in his way, and by his rapid and astonishing progress in knowledge, he hath risen, step by step, to the first offices and honors of his country, hath appeared with dignity in the courts of Britain and of France, and now fills more than half the globe with his fame. Keep this illustrious example in your eye, and show yourselves men.

SERMON III.

THE EVIL EFFECTS OF SIN.

DELIVERED NOVEMBER 3, 1790, AT THE FORMATION OF A SOCIETY IN FRANKLIN FOR THE REFORMATION OF MORALS.

But sin is a reproach to any people. — Proverbs xiv. 34.

The whole verse is this: "Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people." As the mode of expression here requires a more full and pointed antithesis, so the spirit of the original allows us to read the verse with a small variation. "Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is the poverty, depression, or sinking of any people." This latter construction, instead of weakening, serves to corroborate the sense of the former; for reproach as naturally follows poverty and depression, as the shadow follows the body in motion. But without any critical remarks, the very face of the text carries this plain and obvious meaning, that sin naturally tends to involve a people in ruin and reproach. This therefore shall be the leading sentiment in the following discourse.

We have had great opportunity for discovering the nature of sin. For sin hath prevailed more or less, in every person and family, as well as in every community and society of men; and invariably displayed, by all its various operations and appearances, the same malignant nature and tendency. The history of particular persons, and of particular nations, and indeed of the whole world, is but the history of their vices, and of the natural and penal evils which have flowed from them. The Bible draws a shocking picture of the lusts and corruptions which ruined the old world; and of the enormous vices which finally destroyed Sodom, Egypt, Babylon, Nineveh, and many other great and ancient kingdoms. And if we open the leaves of profane history, we find every leaf, like Ezekiel's roll, full

"of lamentations, mourning and wo," the dire effects of sin. It wounds a tender mind to read the history of Alexander, of Mohammed, of the Man of sin, and of those unhappy nations, who have fallen under their cruel and bloody hands; but it would be more than our hearts could endure, could we collect into one view, all the scenes of misery and horror which sin has ever produced in our malevolent world. If therefore we may give the least regard to sacred and profane history, and to the observation and experience of all ages, we are constrained to believe, that sin has a malignant nature, and directly tends to involve a people in ruin and reproach. We know the nature of sin better than the nature of any other object around us; for we have heard, and read, and seen, and felt, more of its evil and fatal effects, than of any other object in the whole circle of our knowledge, observation, or experience. We know that sin is a corrupt tree, because it always bears corrupt fruit. We know therefore, according to the analogy of things, that fire has not a more natural tendency to consume wood, nor water to extinguish fire, than sin has to injure and destroy any people, among whom it is suffered to spread and prevail.

To illustrate and impress this idea, permit me to enter into particulars, and observe,

1. It is the nature of sin to lessen and diminish a people. The most populous nations have been reduced to a handful, by the prevalence of vice. Though Israel, at certain seasons, were numerous as the stars of heaven, yet by their lusts and corruptions they were "minished and brought low." When they left the kingdom of Egypt, they amounted to about three millions, but before they reached the land of promise, near half their numbers pined away in their iniquities, and perished in the wilderness. And though they increased again in the reign of Solomon, yet in the next succeeding reign they departed from God, and for their groundless revolt half a million were destroyed in one day. Nor did their open vices and immoralities ever fail to diminish their numbers, from that time to the time of their final dispersion and ruin. The Greeks, for many ages, maintained their virtue, and continued to increase; but as soon as the vices of Asia corrupted their morals, they immediately began to diminish. Rome was once extremely populous. It contained more inhabitants than are now contained in all the United States. But vice, in a few years, not only thinned the capital, but diminished the whole empire. Vice has a natural as well as a moral tendency to waste and destroy every human society. For indolence, intemperance, luxury, and prodigality, serve to weaken and enervate the human frame, and of course, to expose men to the attacks and ravages of every malignant disorder. Hence we find, that the

whole train of painful and mortal diseases, have always raged with the greatest violence among those nations who have sunk the deepest in moral pollutions.

2. It is the nature of sin to sink and depress the spirits of a people. This is a fair and just conclusion from the last particular. The soul and body are intimately connected, and mutually strengthen or weaken each other. If vice therefore serves to weaken and enervate the body, it must in the same proportion serve to sink and depress the spirit. Besides, the vicious and profligate sensibly feel, that vice immediately affects and contaminates their minds, sets their reason, conscience, and passions at variance, and effectually restrains them from great and noble exertions. Hence says the Father of spirits by the prophet, "whoredom, and wine, and new wine, take away the heart."

A people confirmed in the habits of vice, have no heart to labor, no heart to think, no heart to form, nor execute any virtuous and laudable designs. Their genius withers, their exertions languish, their hopes, and honors, and virtues perish. These are not imaginary, but real and natural effects of the prevalence of vice. And these have been actually experienced, by the most brave and enlightened nations, in the last stages of luxury and corruption. There never was a people, perhaps, more brave and sprightly, and more perfectly polished in their taste and manners, than the ancient people of Athens. They carried learning in general, and the fine arts in particular, next to the last degree of refinement. Their works of genius and taste are still considered and admired as the standards of perfection. But indolence, prodigality and luxury, gradually enslaved and enfeebled their minds, and finally reduced them to the lowest state of savage stupidity and ignorance. The Romans, after they had subdued the Greeks and all other nations within the reach of their arms, finally subdued and enslaved themselves, by their own vices. In the time of Augustus, they reigned masters of the world, and stood without a rival in arms and arts. But at the close of the Augustan age, not only their spirit of enterprise, but their spirit of refinement began to languish; and after that corrupt and dissolute period, they never produced but two men of genius and eminence; the one to relate, and the other to satirize their vices.* The corruption of morals, which now prevails in some of the principal nations of Europe, already begins to impair their mental powers and improvements. Many of their modern productions of genius and taste bear strong and visible marks of declension. Their late publications are extremely superfi-

* Tacitus and Juvenal.

cial. They discover neither strength of mind nor energy of expression. They appear more like the feeble births of leisure and memory, than the strong and masculine offspring of genius and study. They merit the corner of a monthly or weekly paper, but ought never to occupy the page of a serious volume. In short, their plays, novels, epigrams, extracts, and abridgments, which compose the catalogue of their learned labors, are much better suited to amuse and stupify, than to enlighten and enlarge the mind; and therefore they naturally tend to diminish, rather than to increase the common stock of useful knowledge. The British nation, in particular, have been gradually declining in point of literature, ever since the licentious reign of Charles II. This is confirmed by the venerable authority of their own most venerable monuments. Their Newton continues to reign in philosophy; their Locke in metaphysics; their Milton in poetry; and their Addison in neat and nervous composition. When these illustrious and virtuous men went off the stage, the republic of letters sustained a loss, which will never be repaired by the feeble and languishing genius of Britain. Such plain and undeniable facts carry convincing evidence, that the prevalence of vice among a people will impair their minds, obstruct the progress of learning and knowledge, and reduce them to that ignorance and barbarity, which must issue in their ruin and reproach.

3. It is the nature of sin to destroy the wealth of a nation, and subject them to all the evils and reproaches of poverty. Though some species of fraud and dishonesty may, for a certain time, and under certain circumstances, advance a person or people in wealth and grandeur; yet vice, according to its common and natural course, will eventually involve them in poverty and shame. Solomon assures us, "the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty; and drowsiness shall cover a man with rags." And again, "slothfulness casteth into a deep sleep; and an idle soul shall suffer hunger." Luxury and prodigality not only waste the wealth which a people have already acquired; but, by destroying the spirit of industry, effectually prevent the future acquisitions of property. Besides, these vices stupify the minds of a people, and forbid them to reflect where their folly and dissipation will carry them, till poverty and distress awaken their fears, and plunge them into remorse and despair. We have a remarkable instance of this, in the stupid conduct and miserable fate of the corrupt and degenerate Romans. They had acquired immense treasures from their conquered subjects; but their immense prodigality and profusion soon wasted their wealth, and reduced them to extreme poverty. Their houses, their tables,

their equipage, and other articles of private luxury, were sufficient of themselves to destroy the wealthiest nation. But their public profusion was far more extravagant. Their temples, their theatres, their public games, and shows, and triumphs, cost millions and millions! They might have easily seen, that such prodigality and dissipation would soon exhaust the treasures of Rome and all her provinces; but the enchantments of vice would not permit the mass of the people to open their eyes and perceive their danger, till they were past recovery, and completely ripened for ruin. Accordingly they persisted in their folly, till poverty and meanness concluded the scene. The whole empire at length became so poor, so corrupt, and venal, as to be sold at a public auction to a private citizen. This must be the fate of any nation, who give themselves up to prodigality and luxury. No people can possibly supply the insatiable demands of vice; and therefore, unless it be seasonably restrained, it will infallibly sink them in poverty and reproach.

4. It is the nature of vice to deprive a people of the blessings of freedom, and involve them in the misery and meanness of slavery. Were it not for the vices and corruptions of men, they would have no occasion to give up any of their rights and privileges, in order to secure and enjoy the rest. The apostle tells us, "The law was not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for the unholy and profane, for murderers, for stealers, for liars, for whoremongers, and for perjured persons." The ultimate design of government is, to prevent and restrain those open acts of violence, which disturb and injure the virtuous and peaceable members of society. But it is the nature of vice to pervert this salutary and important design of government, and transform it into an engine of slavery and ruin.

Vice has the same effect upon the body politic, that sickness has upon the natural body. The natural body is composed of innumerable cords or ligatures, which unite the parts, and strengthen the members to perform their office. But sickness serves to relax and dissolve these tender cords, and bring on a total extinction of life and motion. So the body politic is composed of innumerable moral ties and connections, which, like veins and nerves, give strength and freedom to all its members. The ties of religion, the ties of virtue, the ties of friendship, the ties of commerce, the ties of office, the ties of custom and habit, so long as they retain their proper force, do more to promote the union and happiness of a people, than all their civil laws and constitutions. But it is the nature of vice to affect such fine and tender cords of society, and by dissolving

these, to throw the whole body politic into great and fatal convulsions. Intemperance, prodigality, luxury and debauchery, not only violate the laws of religion and virtue, and disturb the peace and harmony of families, but at the same time set the nearest and firmest friends at variance, dissolve the connections of trade, and fill the minds of rulers with more concern to supplant their rivals, than to promote the common interest and freedom of their subjects. Vice, by destroying these moral and social ties, effectually saps the foundation of freedom, and completely prepares a people for the shackles of slavery. For nothing but the rod of arbitrary power is sufficient to restrain and govern a people, who have lost their virtue, and sunk into vice and corruption. Such a people are neither fit to enjoy, nor able to assert and maintain their liberties. They must be slaves.

Vice destroyed the liberties of Greece. Vice subverted the freedom of Rome. Vice deprived the christian church of her invaluable rights and privileges, and subjected multitudes of the meek and harmless followers of Christ to all the usurpation and cruelty of the Man of sin. Vice, in these and all other instances, first preyed upon the nerves and sinews, before it attacked the vitals of liberty. But though vice be sometimes slow in its progress, yet in the course of its operation it never fails to destroy the freedom of a people. No instance, we presume, can be produced, where vice had pervaded all ranks and classes of a civil community, but it finally involved them in slavery and ruin. Whole nations are now living witnesses of this melancholy truth; and the cries and groans of millions are constantly proclaiming to the world, that vice and slavery are inseparably connected. I must still add,

5. It is the nature of vice to provoke the displeasure of God, and draw down his judgments, to complete the ruin of a people. As all nations believe the existence of some Divinity, so they all suppose he is displeased with vice, and disposed to punish it. All the heathen poets represent vindictive justice as one of the attributes of the heathen deities. And they draw their descriptions of the pagan gods from the common opinion of the pagan world. It is said, the Athenians recalled their celebrated general Alcibiades from an important expedition, because the night before his departure he cast public reproach and contempt upon the gods of his country. The men of Athens expected their divinities would blast his enterprise, and ruin their commonwealth, for such a bold and public act of profaneness. But we, who are christians, have more than conjecture, we have absolute certainty, that the governor of the world will severely punish human societies for their public

vices. God hath expressly told us, that it is an invariable maxim of his providence, to pluck up and destroy any nation or kingdom, for its incorrigible wickedness. And more than this, he hath given us a particular catalogue of those very vices and corruptions, which have actually awakened his displeasure, and drawn down his judgments upon the nations of the earth. He drowned the old world, for stupidity, violence, and debauchery. He rained fire and brimstone upon Sodom and Gomorrah, for pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness. He poured the vials of his wrath upon Pharaoh and his subjects, for pride, oppression and cruelty. He extirpated the seven nations of Canaan, for lewdness, incest, and brutal uncleanness. He punished the Israelites, for murmuring and unbelief. He cut off the ten tribes of Israel, for idolatry and rebellion. And in the days of Isaiah, he smote with a scab the crown of the head of the daughters of Zion, for their haughty airs and extravagant dress. In short, we never find a single instance in scripture, where God threatens to destroy a nation or kingdom, but he at the same time declares, that their sins are the procuring cause of his wasting judgments. "Evil pursueth sinners." Every people, therefore, have reason to expect, that their sins will sooner or later find them out, and involve them in ruin and reproach.

Having illustrated the point I proposed, I must now beg every hearer to lay aside all bias and prejudice, and give a candid and impartial attention to what I have still to suggest, in the application of this moral subject.

If it be a truth, that the prevalence of vice directly tends to bring a nation to ruin and reproach, this is certainly a very serious and interesting truth with respect to us, who have just taken our rank among the nations of the earth. Doctor Price, whose abilities and friendship demand our particular attention and respect, has these just and enlightened observations on our present critical and important situation: "It is a conviction I cannot resist, that the independence of the English colonies in America is one of the steps ordained by Providence to introduce the universal empire of reason and virtue: and I can scarcely be deceived in this conviction, if the United States should escape some dangers which threaten them, and will take proper care to throw themselves open to future improvements, and to make the most of their present situation. If this should happen, it will be true of them as it was of the people of the Jews, that in them all nations of the earth shall be blessed. It is scarcely possible that they should think too highly of their consequence. Perhaps there never existed a people, on whose wisdom and virtue more depended; or to

whom a station of more importance in the plan of providence has been assigned. They have begun nobly. They have fought with success for themselves and for the world; and in the midst of invasion and carnage, established forms of government favorable in the highest degree to the rights of mankind. But they have much more to do; more indeed than it is possible properly to represent."

This great politician apprehends that we are exposed to dangers. But what dangers can be more alarming than those which arise from the decay of virtue and the corruption of morals? We are young indeed, but very corrupt, considering our age. We are like Ephraim of old, who had gray hairs here and there, but perceived them not. The leaven of vice has begun to operate, and unless it be speedily counteracted, it will leaven our whole nation, and blast all our flattering hopes and prospects.

The time was, when we were distinguished among all other nations, for purity of manners. Our fathers, when they came into this land, were strict and rigid in their notions of morality; and even censured some things as vicious and criminal, which were perhaps really innocent and laudable. But alas! how is the gold become dim! how is the most fine gold changed! We are fallen far into the opposite extreme. For near twenty years past, various causes have united their influence to introduce almost every species of vice and corruption among us. War is always prejudicial to the interests of piety and virtue; especially the war in which we have been lately engaged, which continued so long, and which spread so far through the heart of our country. Our army contained a collection of the loosest characters, who being free from their usual restraint, soon corrupted the minds of many, who, when they came into the camp, possessed the principles and habits of morality. Most of our youth were necessarily called, in the course of the war, into this corrupt and dangerous school; and being disbanded at the commencement of peace, they mixed with the mass of the people, and greatly increased, wherever they went, the corruption of morals. Besides, during the war, the neglect of schools, the relaxation of government, and the rapid depreciation of a paper currency, afforded new opportunities, and suggested new and strong temptations to vice.

By the united influence of these and various other causes, we have actually become an extremely corrupt and degenerate people. Isaiah's description of the Jews will apply to us, without the least variation. "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot unto the head, there is no soundness in it, but wounds and bruises and putri-

fying sores; they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment."

It is truly alarming to take a serious and particular view of our prevailing corruptions. The name of God is freely and awfully profaned amongst us. This heinous and unnatural sin, which was formerly confined to particular places and to particular persons, is now become a general vice, and deeply corrupts the language of common discourse. A sober man, at this day of declension, can scarcely fall into company, or travel the roads, or pursue his common concerns, but his ears will be wounded by impious and profane language. The streets are filled with children, who learn the dialect of hell before they learn the rudiments of their mother tongue; and who, instead of remembering and praising their Maker, are growing up in the habit of taking his great and tremendous name in vain. Swearing is become so universally prevalent, that we have reason to fear, a thousand curses are every day entering into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth, to one effectual, fervent prayer to obtain his pardoning mercy.

The Bible, which came from God, and displays his character and will; which unfolds his great and gracious designs, and opens the only door of hope to guilty perishing sinners; is much neglected and despised by us, and often treated as a cunningly devised fable. Some deny the inspiration of the scriptures. Some pervert the fundamental truths of christianity. Some attack the first principles of virtue and religion. And multitudes are plunged in the waves of uncertainty and doubt. This spirit of infidelity and skepticism, which begins to spread and prevail among us, threatens to destroy our remaining religion and virtue, to fill up the measure of our iniquities, and expose us to the severest marks of the divine displeasure.

We treat sacred and divine things with great neglect and contempt. Some totally disregard the holy Sabbath. Some employ it in the common concerns of life. Some devote it to scenes of vice and amusement. Some travel more on that day of sacred rest than on any other day in the week. And many who neither travel nor labor, nor visit on the Sabbath, yet make a general practice of neglecting the public worship of God in his house. Though our numbers are evidently increasing, yet our religious assemblies are visibly diminishing. There appears through the land an uncommon indifference and coldness respecting the duties of public devotion; and the ways of our Zion mourn, because her sacred solemnities are greatly despised and neglected. The public worship of God was designed to keep alive in our minds a realizing sense of the great objects and motives of eternity. Those therefore who

neglect and despise the house and worship of God, we may be certain, neglect and despise every thing sacred and divine; and have lost all sense of the infinite weight and importance of eternal realities. And when these objects have lost their weight and influence upon the minds of a people, there is nothing to restrain them from the grossest vices and immoralities.

We have criminally departed from the noble and virtuous examples of our pious ancestors, in neglecting family religion and family government. They brought up their children and those committed to their care in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and warned them against every appearance of evil. They strictly guarded them in their young and inexperienced age, and actually restrained them from that company, and from those places, where they would be eminently exposed to temptation. And to impress all their instructions and admonitions the deeper on their tender minds, they called them together every morning and evening to the private devotions of the family. This general and strict observance of family religion and family government, which went hand in hand and strengthened each other, did, for more than a century, preserve our virtues, and prevent a general corruption of morals. But now these strongest bulwarks of virtue and piety are gone. For family devotion and parental instruction and discipline are very generally neglected and despised. Many of the rising families do neither exhibit the forms of religion, nor the examples of virtue. They cast off fear, and restrain prayer before God, and neglect the important duties which they owe to Him, to the public, to themselves, and to the precious souls committed to their care and instruction. These prayerless and irreligious families are the hives of vice. And from these, we may expect, will issue swarms of prayerless children, prayerless parents, ungovernable subjects, and prodigies of wickedness, to disturb the peace of society, and to propagate irreligion and immorality from generation to generation.

There is no vice in nature more debasing and destructive to men than the vice of intemperance. It robs them of their reason, reputation, and interest. It renders them unfit for human society. It degrades them below the beasts that perish, and justly exposes them to universal odium and contempt. But even this mean and shameful vice has become extremely common and fashionable amongst us. Multitudes may be seen every day, and almost every where, wallowing in drunkenness, and glorying in their shame. Intemperance appears not only in public houses, and at public places, but in private families, and among individuals of every age and every sex.

Those foreign liquors, which were once used as mere cordials and delicacies only, are now used by many, as common and necessary articles of life. The consumption of intoxicating spirits is tenfold greater now than in time past, and a thousand-fold greater than it ever ought to be in time to come. Among all our vices, there is none so rapid in its progress, nor so fatal in its consequences, as this of intemperance. And unless it be seasonably restrained, it will assuredly turn the poor men into sots, the rich men into beggars, and the wise men into fools.

Prodigality reigns among us in every form, and in every place, covering the heads of rich and poor with the feathers of folly and pride. Those silks which ought to be worn by those nations to whom they were given for use, are become the common ornaments not only of our ladies and gentlemen, but of multitudes in the lowest ranks of life. The rage for foreign manufactures, foreign fashions, foreign customs and manners, seems to have seized people of every class, and rendered them totally blind to their own, as well as to the public good. Our resources are by no means sufficient to support our prodigality and extravagance. We live in a country formed by nature for agriculture rather than for commerce. We shall never be able, therefore, to support that luxury and profusion, which the more commercial and opulent nations have been able to support. A people who are obliged to labor with their hands, must never indulge in the fopperies and ornaments of dress, but always practice the rigid virtues of industry and economy. It is our wisdom and honor, therefore, as a distinct and separate nation, to form our own customs and manners agreeably to our own peculiar genius, situation, and climate. Besides, we are now loaded with a public debt of many millions, which requires all our exertions, and the most frugal application of all our resources, to discharge. The voice of prudence, the demands of justice, and even the cries of necessity, unitedly urge us to a reformation of manners, and a general disuse of foreign superfluities. And unless we seasonably hearken to these admonitions, we have nothing to expect, but to reap the fruits of our folly in poverty and shame.

I might still add to this long list of vices, injustice, avarice, oppression, indolence, gaming, and almost every other species of corruption, which ever disgraced the most abandoned people. But it is time to observe,

That all these open and gross immoralities, which I have now mentioned, are in the strictest sense, land-defiling and God-provoking iniquities, which threaten to destroy our highest and best interests, both for time and eternity. If public

vices have invariably destroyed single individuals, private families, and whole nations and kingdoms in time past; it is the height of folly for us to imagine, that the same vices in time to come will not be followed with the same serious and fatal consequences. If the laws of nature remain, and the same causes continue to produce the same effects, our sins will as certainly, and much more rapidly, destroy us, as the same sins have actually destroyed other nations. For,

Vice is the bane of a republic, and immediately saps the foundations of liberty. If our industry, economy, temperance, justice, and public faith, are once extinguished by the opposite vices, our boasted constitution, which is built upon the pillars of virtue, must necessarily fall. And if any other form of government should happen to arise from its ruins, it must be one which springs from corruption, which is administered by corruption, and which tends to spread and perpetuate corruption.

Besides, we have more reason than any other nation, to expect that our vices will speedily awaken the displeasure of the Almighty, and draw down his judgments upon us. Heaven has favored us with great and distinguishing privileges. We have been indulged with more instructions and examples of virtue and religion, than any other nation on earth. We have had line upon line, and precept upon precept. We have been planted in the house of the Lord. We have lived in virtuous and religious families. And great numbers of us have been long inured to the political virtues of economy, industry, temperance, and commutative justice. By falling into vice, therefore, we shall do violence to our customs and habits, as well as to the enlightened dictates of reason and conscience. Add to all this, the great and marvellous deliverances, which God has, from age to age, and especially of late, granted to our nation. These will amazingly aggravate our guilt, if we forsake the author of our mercies and the God of our fathers, and defile the land which he hath taken from the heathens and given to us. We may justly conclude, therefore, that God will deal with us for our sins, as he said he would deal with his own people, on whom he had bestowed great and distinguishing favors. "You only of all the families of the earth have I known, therefore I will punish you for your iniquities."

Now if our sins do really abound, and eminently expose us to ruin and reproach, what is our duty? Is there a single person at a loss to know? Our guilt and danger speak louder than words, and call upon us to exert every effort, to prevent and restrain the corruption of the times. But what course shall we pursue? Let us awake from our lethargy, consider our situation, and remove the grounds of our danger. We

shall be enemies to ourselves as well as the public, if we do not put away our strange vices, as the polluted Israelites put away theirs, in the days of Ezra, and in a time of reformation. And let us moreover do, as some of the same people did, on account of the corruption of morals. They sighed, and cried, and prayed for the guilty nation; and then united their exertions to reform their public vices. They entered into a solemn engagement, and sealed it with their own hands, to employ all their influence in restraining open and shameful immoralities.

Nor let any imagine that it is either impracticable or fruitless in these times, to form unions in virtue to weaken and destroy combinations in vice. This mode of reformation has been tried, in various parts of the British dominions, with great success. At the end of the bishop of St. David's sermon, preached to the societies for the Reformation of Manners, is subjoined the three-and-thirtieth account of the progress made in the cities of London and Westminster, and places adjacent, by those virtuous and respectable societies. The account says, "This undertaking, begun by a few persons, has mightily spread itself, not only in Great Britain, but in foreign parts. And the great good which, by God's blessing, has been done by the said societies has very much animated their endeavors. They have likewise been encouraged by several royal proclamations, orders of sessions, presentments of grand juries, in many counties in England; by the lord mayors and court of aldermen in the city of London; by many sermons of the right reverend the bishops, and other eminent divines, preached to the societies, and by the writings of other learned men." After this, the account farther says, "The said societies have presented, and been assisting in presenting, from the first day of December 1727, divers sorts of offenders, namely: For lewd and disorderly practices, common gaming houses, and other disorderly houses, common gamesters, profane swearing and cursing, exercising their trades or ordinary callings on the Lord's day, and for drunkenness; in all, one thousand three hundred and sixty-three.

"The total number of persons prosecuted by the societies, in or near London only, for debauchery and profaneness, for thirty-six years last past, are calculated at about ninety-four thousand three hundred and twenty-two."

These accounts carry convincing evidence, that unions in virtue may be so formed and conducted, as to restrain, in some measure at least, the progress of vice. What is there then which can possibly prevent us, in this day of declension, from uniting our exertions for the reformation of manners, but merely the want of virtuous resolution? Were we sufficiently

possessed of virtuous resolution, we might easily form such respectable unions, as would put the bold and brazen vices to the blush, and cause them to creep into corners. Union is of singular service to any who are engaged in promoting the same common cause. It collects their wisdom, adds weight to their characters, and at the same time enlivens their zeal and fortitude. Indeed, union in a good cause scarcely ever fails of success. Can we therefore answer it to God, or to ourselves, if we neglect to pursue those measures, which we believe are wise and expedient, and would effectually check the progress of vice, and produce a reformation of manners? I mean not, however, to urge this point. I choose to submit this subject to your more private, deliberate, and solemn reflections.

But if the measure which we have now suggested should surpass the strength of your virtue; yet there remain many other methods of restraining vice, which lie equally open to every individual. Be entreated then to act properly as individuals, and exert all the influence of your private characters and connections, to restrain the licentiousness of the times.

Let the aged lead in this good design. They have lived to see the happy fruits of virtue, and the baneful effects of vice. They have lived to observe that course of conduct, by which these infant States gradually arose to greatness and affluence; and that course of conduct by which they are now subjected to great embarrassments. They have lived in the days of industry, economy and temperance, and owe their ease, reputation, and fortunes to the practice of these political virtues. They are able therefore, by their own observation and experience, to warn the young and inexperienced, of the folly and danger of departing from their primitive purity and simplicity of manners; and to exhibit the most forcible evidence, that diligence and virtue will raise men to wealth and honor, but idleness and vice will sink them to poverty and wretchedness.

It is the duty of parents to employ their peculiar power and authority in promoting the reformation of morals. They have the first and easiest access to their children, while their minds are young and tender, and susceptible of the deepest impressions. They have peculiar opportunity of inculcating the precepts of prudence, virtue and religion, before their minds have been hardened and corrupted by the pollutions of the world. They may, by a proper mixture of instruction, persuasion, authority, and example, form their external conduct and behavior, almost just as they please. And in this way they can do more to restrain the prevalence of vice, than all the exertions of ministers and rulers can do, without their particu-

lar concurrence and aid. They are therefore under the strongest obligations to give their children a virtuous and pious education. They ought, in season, to teach them the knowledge of God, the nature of religion, the beauty of virtue, and the deformity of vice. They ought to enforce all their instructions by their own amiable and virtuous examples. They ought to keep a vigilant eye upon the conduct and disposition of their children, and carefully restrain them from those particular evils, to which they perceive they are particularly exposed. They ought to shut their doors against the entrance of vice; and never suffer their children to push into the world, before they are possessed of either age or experience to govern their conduct. These are methods, by which parents may preserve the peace and purity of their own families, and at the same time universally promote the reformation of manners.

It is the proper business of executive officers, to employ their power and authority in suppressing those public vices, which corrupt the morals and disturb the peace of society. We have strict and severe laws against profane swearing, sabbath-breaking, gaming, tavern-haunting, drunkenness, lewdness, and debauchery. But have these laws against these public and pernicious vices been duly executed? We have scarcely known a single person, in the course of twenty years, who has been prosecuted either for swearing, sabbath-breaking, drunkenness, or gaming. Has this been owing to the scarcity of offenders, or to the want of evidence? If not, can it be imputed to any thing else, than the neglect of informing and executive officers? Better had it been, to have had no such laws enacted; better would it be, to have them now repealed, than to have such silent laws and silent magistrates. Can those who wear the sword of justice, wear it in vain, and yet be blameless? Or can they answer for their negligence before the Supreme Ruler, whose ministers they are, and before whom they have lifted up their hand to be faithful? It is devoutly to be wished, that all from the highest to the lowest in the executive department, would personally obey and faithfully execute the laws of the land.

The supreme judges in the several States may throw the weight of their great and respectable characters into the scale of virtue. Their sacred regard to the Sabbath; their constant attendance on public worship and family devotion; their open profession of the great principles of natural and revealed religion; their shining examples of virtue and piety in all their public and private conduct; will give great encouragement to the practice of virtue, and pour the highest contempt upon the practice of vice.

The subordinate judges, justices, and informing officers, being much more numerous and much more conversant with the people at large, have a far greater opportunity for employing their exemplary characters and peculiar powers in promoting a reformation of manners, through all the counties, towns, and parishes in each of our commonwealths.

We must, in tenderness and compassion to those who are pursuing the paths of vice, beseech them to consider not only the present but future consequences of their pernicious course. The contagion of their vices may reach to future ages, and destroy, after they are dead and sunk in oblivion, the souls of millions. "One sinner destroyeth much good." One sinner destroyed the ten tribes of Israel. It is repeated again and again, "Jeroboam the son of Nebat, made Israel to sin — Jeroboam the son of Nebat, made Israel to sin — Jeroboam the son of Nebat, made Israel to sin."

What a load of guilt did that vile and corrupt seducer contract! What curses did he heap upon his own head, by drawing away the souls of thousands, age after age, from the service, from the house, and from the favor of God! With what a stigma of reproach hath God linked his name and character together, and conveyed them down to the latest generations, as a warning to all who shall dare to corrupt and destroy the souls of others! Let such at this day be entreated to regard this kind and salutary warning, and immediately repent and reform. It is possible they may now, in some measure, undo what they have already done, by endeavoring to reclaim and save those from ruin whom their vicious examples have well-nigh destroyed.

But though every other description of characters should either neglect or obstruct the reformation of manners, yet we trust all the friends of God will cheerfully join in promoting this virtuous and benevolent design. They will not cease to sigh and cry for the abominations committed in the land, nor neglect to pour out their hearts before God, for the effusions of his Spirit, and the revival of religion. The Noahs, Jobs and Daniels, have great encouragement to wrestle with God in prayer, that he would graciously take the work of reformation into his own hand, and change the lives of men, by changing their hearts. This would be a reformation indeed. This would destroy the roots and branches of vice together.

Thus every person in every station of life has some weight and influence to be employed in the cause of virtue. And who can hesitate in these evil days, which side to take, or what part to act? Every man will find his account in the reformation of morals. For "righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin

is a reproach to any people." There are various motives, which urge us immediately to exert our best endeavors to restrain our prevailing vices, and to revive those languishing virtues, which were once our distinguishing glory and happiness.

If we now begin to check our growing vices and corruptions, we may hope to succeed. The piety and virtue of some, and the distresses of others, bear a favorable aspect upon the reformation of morals. Delays will afford us no help nor encouragement, but only weaken our resolutions, and increase our difficulties. If we can ever restrain our public immoralities, we can restrain them now. Now therefore is the time to begin. The work of reformation devolves upon us; and we cannot refer it to another generation, without neglecting our own duty, and suffering the cause of virtue to languish in our own hands.

Besides, if we are remiss in checking those vices and corruptions which spring up and prevail while we are upon the stage, we shall actually partake in the guilt of those whom we neglect to reform; and must expect to share in the dreadful calamities, which may justly fall upon a corrupt and incorrigible people.

But if we faithfully endeavor to suppress the prevalence of vice, as far as our power and influence extend, we shall merit that noble and distinguishing character which belongs to reformers. And who would not wish to be placed on the list which enrolls the names and embalms the memory of Asa, Josiah, Jehoiada, and many other great and amiable men, who improved the virtues, and restrained the vices of the several ages in which they lived? God, who carries the characters of all in his hand, hath expressly said, "Them that honor me I will honor, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed."

But if all our efforts in the cause of virtue should fail of success, and only expose our characters to the reproach of those whom we labor to reclaim, yet the approbation of conscience in the hour of death will afford us an ample and sufficient reward. When all our civil and social relations on earth shall finally cease, then to be able to reflect, that we have done all in our power to leave those behind us more virtuous and happy, will be the strongest support and the highest satisfaction that our natures can know.

SERMON IV.

EXAMPLE.

PREACHED SEPTEMBER 3, 1792.

But to make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow us. — 2 Thess. iii. 9.

Ensample is only another word for example. Each of these terms properly denotes a copy or pattern, which is designed to convey either natural or moral instruction. And this mode of teaching is, of all others, the most easy and forcible. Precept constrains; example allures. Precept compels; example persuades. Precept is a dead, example is a living law. Such a law the apostles made themselves to the Thessalonians. The case was this. Some among them had neglected their daily business, misimproved their precious time, and become a burden and temptation to others. While the apostle, therefore, reproves such idle and disorderly persons, he reminds them, that he, and other preachers of the gospel, had labored night and day, merely to set them an example of diligence and activity in business. "Not because we have not power," that is, a right to lay aside secular concerns, "but to make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow us." These words, on this occasion, naturally lead us to consider the peculiar force of example. And in order to discover its great and extensive influence, it will be proper to view it in a variety of respects.

1. Let us consider it in respect to some other things, which are known to have great influence upon human conduct. Advice is persuasive, but example is more persuasive. Let a man advise his friend to act contrary to his own example, and what will be the effect? His friend will follow his example and reject his advice. The force of authority is great, but the force

of example is greater. A parent's habitual conduct has more influence upon his children, than his most positive precepts. The law of the land is not equal to the law of example. Every written law must yield to common law; and common law is nothing but long and immemorial example. A man may safely travel any road, use any property, speak any word, or do any action, which common and uninterrupted custom allows. For all written laws are obliged to bend to the supreme law of example.

2. We may consider the force of example upon the human mind, in the various stages of life. These are usually divided into childhood, youth, manhood, and old age.

In childhood, example is always the governing motive of action. Every one comes into the world a total stranger to men and things. In this situation, the child takes example for his first and surest guide. By example he learns what is harmless and what is hurtful; what is decent and what is indecent; what is pleasing and what is displeasing; what secures approbation and what creates disgust. He observes every person's conduct, and endeavors to act as he sees others act; especially those with whom he lives and on whom he depends. A sense of dependence and a desire to please, are habitual dispositions in children, which continually impel them to follow the example of others. They soon perceive their want of assistance from those who possess superior strength and superior wisdom; and to secure this assistance is their first and supreme object. But to attain this desirable object, they find by experience that they must speak as others speak, dress as others dress, walk as others walk, sit as others sit, and, in all their behavior, conform to the example of others. In this way, they make swift advances in the knowledge of the world. They learn something every day and every moment. They let no person pass by them without observation nor without instruction. Hence to learn, and to learn by example, becomes a habit; and this habit, formed in this early and tender age, becomes a second nature, which time only serves to strengthen and increase.

In youth, which is the next period of life, they still retain their natural sense of inferiority and dependence, and are eager to secure the favor and patronage of those who have reached the years of manhood. To act like men, is the height of their ambition. They mean, therefore, to follow their example and tread in their steps, as nearly as possible. Nor are they inattentive to those of their own age, among whom there is great inequality in other respects. Some have superior wealth, some superior learning, some superior genius, some superior reputation, and some superior art and address. These become lead-

ers, while others, who feel their inferiority, are obliged to follow their steps. Hence the rising generation grow up under the habit of imitation and the power of example. Let them turn which way they will, the example of both their equals and superiors in age attacks them with a double influence, which they are totally unable to resist.

In manhood, they arrive to years of discretion, enter upon the busy scenes of life, and attain a certain measure of independence and self-direction. But though they now equally disregard the example of the young and of the aged, yet they cannot rise above the example of those of their own standing. In the meridian of life, men sustain very different characters and relations, and are placed in very different circumstances. Some are rich and some are poor; some are high and some are low; some move in a private and some in a public station. Accordingly, all continue to lead and to be led. Though ambition, in this season of life, takes a more serious turn, forsaking the vanities of childhood and youth, and pursuing the manly objects of riches, honor, and power, yet it loses nothing of its real strength and vigor. In manhood, all the powers and passions of the mind are bent upon making and supporting distinctions. Every one is sanguine to distinguish himself, by setting example to some, and by following the example of others. There is no man but feels he has both superiors and inferiors. The rich feel they have superiors in learning; the learned feel they have superiors in genius; the men of genius feel they have superiors in influence and address. And on the other hand, the poor feel themselves to be superior to many in beauty of body, in strength of mind, and in many other qualities which command esteem and respect. The consciousness of this mutual superiority and inferiority disposes every man both to set and to follow example. He means to follow the example of his superior, and to set example to his inferior. This disposition to lead and to be led, displays itself in every art and science; in every business and diversion of life. Let the mechanic go into the museum of the philosopher, and the philosopher will feel and display his superiority. Let the philosopher go into the shop of the mechanic, and the mechanic will feel and display his superiority. Let the philosopher, the mechanic, the merchant, the attorney, the physician, and the farmer, meet in the same company, and each will feel, by turns, his superiority and inferiority, as the conversation happens to fall upon different subjects. And let the man of the world mix in this company of learned and useful men, and he will lose that sense of superiority which he felt in the circle of the gay and trifling, and sink into his own proper insignificance.

Thus, in the meridian of life, while men are pursuing power, riches, honor, and pleasure, example has the largest field to exert her sovereign influence over all their views and behavior.

In old age, which is the last and most serious stage of life, we might expect that example would lose all her influence: but observation and experience clearly teach us the contrary. The aged both set and follow example. In some places, the aged gradually retire from the view, from the conversation, from the employments and diversions of those in younger life; but in other places, they keep up their connections with the world, mix among the young and the gay, and join in their employments and amusements. This practice prevails among the rich and the great in all polished nations, and is much recommended by many modern writers. Here we see that the influence of example never leaves men till they leave the world. And indeed, it often displays its power at the approach of death. When Cæsar was stabbed in the senate house, and perceived that his wounds were incurable, he wrapped his cloak around him, and threw himself into the most decent posture for dying. And criminals are often seen to be very attentive to the rules of politeness, while they are standing on the brink of time, and preparing for the awful stroke of justice. Such is the early and lasting influence of example. It takes mankind by the hand in their infancy, and leads them through all the remaining stages of life. It is the first law they know, and the only law they keep. Its authority is gentle, though always irresistible; and its precepts are pleasing, though often severe and tyrannical. I pass,

3. To consider the influence of example upon human societies. These are composed of individuals, and equally subject to the power of example. A family is a small but important society. In this little circle children acquire their strongest habits. It is not so much what the parents command, or what others advise, as what every one does, that forms the characters and manners of children. Jonadab's example formed the character of his children, and of his children's children, from generation to generation. Domestic example has the same influence among all nations and in all places. Take a child from one nation and carry him to another, and his character will more resemble the nation in which he is educated, than that in which he was born. Or take a child only from one family, and put him into another of the same place, and he will more resemble the family in which he is brought up, than that from which he was taken, and from which he derived his very existence. If you go into a little neighborhood, parish, or town, you will find a certain similarity in their customs and manners.

This can be ascribed to nothing but the force of example. There is no law, human or divine, which requires towns, parishes, or neighborhoods to observe such a similarity of conduct; and perhaps no law but that of example would be strong enough to produce such an effect. If we consider the peculiarities which are observable in national characters, we must ascribe these to the powerful influence of example, rather than to different climates, different food, different laws, or different religions. A nation takes its peculiar character from the stock from which it originates. Wherever we can discover the first inhabitants of any country, there we find that they gave the national character to their descendants. In America we are able to trace the rise and progress of each of the United States. We know the character of the first planters of Massachusetts, of Rhode-Island, of New-York, of Pennsylvania, of Maryland. And we know that the same peculiarities which distinguished the first settlers, continue to distinguish their descendants in each of those states. The national character of the natives of America was formed by example, for they had no written laws nor written religion to form it; and there is no national character more distinctly and strongly marked than theirs. They will by no means conform to the customs and manners of any other nation. The reason is, they make the example of their progenitors the sole rule of their conduct. Example is their supreme law, which they use every possible method to render absolutely sacred. Such is the force of example in all human societies, that it marks them with peculiar and permanent characters; and the nature of men must be changed, before this effect of example will cease. I observe once more,

4. That example governs all the modes of human conduct. The modes of speaking, of reading, of writing, among all civilized nations, are formed by the force of example. These modes vary according to the opinion and practice of those who are esteemed the best instructers. The few set the example to the many, and the many implicitly follow. The mass of the people have no other guide in these matters than bare example. The higher branches of learning are subject to the same sovereign authority. Sometimes mathematics, sometimes philosophy, sometimes metaphysics, and sometimes the fine arts are in fashion. And each of these sciences is principally cultivated, according to the example of those who reign in the republic of letters. Example governs the various modes of building. Different nations, different states, different towns, and even different villages, commonly construct their buildings in a different manner. In travelling the road, when we meet with a cluster of houses, we may generally observe a great

similarity in their structure, magnitude and materials. This is a similar instance of the force of example which is every where to be seen. Example fixes the various degrees of reputation, which belongs to the various stations and employments of life, in the various parts of the world. Different professions are very differently esteemed in different nations, and even in different parts of the same nation. And there is scarcely any profession but what is reputable among some people. Among the Jews it was reputable to labor in any of the mechanic arts. Our blessed Saviour was a carpenter, and the son of a carpenter. To cultivate the earth was the original business of man. And this employment was honorable among the Romans in their most flourishing situation. Cincinnatus was repeatedly called from the plough, to the head of that mighty empire. In different parts of our own country, different professions are very differently esteemed. To labor with the hands in the field, in the house, or in the shop, is reputable in the northern states. But in the southern states, every species of manual labor is looked upon as below the dignity of men of rank and fortune. This is the fruit of example, which has peculiar influence upon men, in the choice of their particular occupations and professions. Nor does the force of example stop here, but absolutely directs almost every man in the particular modes of prosecuting his particular business. The son follows the example of the father, the daughter the example of her mother, the servant the example of his master, the scholar the example of his teacher. And posterity follow the example of their ancestors.

The great affairs of government are subject to the supreme power of example. A single nation follows some great general, or great politician. One nation treads in the steps of another. The modes of one government are interwoven with those of another. The British government still retains the effects of popery, and many of the laws of Rome. The American government bears striking features of the British. And the French constitution is a mere transcript of the American.

The modes of religion ought to be wholly subject to divine authority; but the example of man often outweighs the authority of God, in these serious concerns. The peculiarities and ceremonies of each different sect among christians, took their origin from the opinion and practice of one single person, or of a few individuals. And when a sect is formed, example preserves its existence, and all its peculiarities. Let me instance in the Friends, a sect with whom we are acquainted. Their peculiarities can scarcely plead the least divine warrant.

But yet there is no other sect so perfectly uniform in all their religious modes, even to the smallest punctilios. This must arise from the prodigious power of example.

Modes of public mourning and of public rejoicing take their rise from the same powerful cause. Example is the law to which all nations submit in those points of ceremony. Savage nations mourn and rejoice according to nature; but polished nations according to art. The former give indulgence to their passions, the latter lay them under restraint, and neither mourn nor rejoice according to their own feelings, but according to the feelings of the spectators, who are less interested in the mournful or joyful events. Here example appears stronger than the strongest passions of human nature.

I may add, it is the proper province of example to govern modes of dress, modes of living, and modes of diversion. Here example reigns alone and supreme. It has no superior, no assistant, and no rival. Example commands the French always to change, and forbids the Spaniards ever to alter, their dress; and both are equally obedient. Men eat and drink more according to example, than according to reason, interest, health, or appetite. Were it not for the tyranny of example, men would live as much according to nature as the inferior animals, and as seldom injure themselves by intemperance. But foolish example triumphs over their reason, interest, reputation, and happiness, and subjects them to the greatest present and future evils.

Diversions, properly so called, have no foundation either in reason or religion. They are the offspring of a corrupt heart, and nourished by vicious example. God requires duties, and nothing but duties. And the duties which he requires are so various, and so well adapted to our present state, that in the performing of them, we may find all the relaxation of body and mind, which either can ever require. But example overcomes duty, and constrains all to indulge themselves in amusement which the dictates of reason and the commands of God forbid. Few have the conscience and the resolution to resist this tyranny of example. Most are easily led astray by the practice of those, whom they consider as greater, or wiser, or better than themselves. Many diversions wear an innocent appearance, though they really murder time, and unfit the heart for the duties of devotion. All diversions, whether more mean or more manly, are "the grapes of Sodom," and "the clusters of Gomorrah;" and though they are sweet to the taste, yet they are bitter to the conscience, and injurious to the soul. But example is strong enough to stifle the dictates of duty, and to lead the sons and daughters of men in the smooth

and pleasant path of diversion, to endless ruin. Thus it appears from universal observation and experience, that example has a great and constant influence over mankind, in all their diversions and employments, through every stage and condition of life, from the cradle to the grave.

It now only remains to improve the subject.

1. We learn from the great influence of example, why parents are so successful in the education of their children. They naturally have a strong and tender affection for their offspring, which is a powerful motive to promote their reputation and happiness. But though they generally endeavor to instruct and restrain them, both by precept and penalty, yet they often find, to their sorrow, that their well-meant endeavors fail of answering their ardent wishes. And this is frequently a matter of their astonishment, as well as of their grief. But if they would only reflect on their own example, which they have set before their children, they might, in many cases, easily discover the principal cause of their great disappointment. They often defeat their own instructions and corrections by their own examples. Example has a more constant and controlling influence over the minds of children, than any precepts or penalties. If parents neglect to govern their own tongues, children will neglect to govern theirs. If parents neglect to govern their own tempers, children will neglect to govern theirs. If parents neglect to treat their superiors, inferiors, and equals, with proper respect, children will follow their ill example. If parents disregard and violate the Sabbath, children will do the same. If parents are prayerless, so will the children be. If parents are worldly-minded, children will imbibe the same spirit. If parents trample on the laws of the land, children will be unwholesome members of society. If parents are given to vanity, children will become still more vain in their feelings and appearance. In short, children will be more influenced by the example of their parents, than by all their instructions and restraints. It is the want of good example more than any thing else, which so often defeats parental instructions. If parents, therefore, would enforce their good instructions, by their good examples, they would happily succeed in the education of their children, and train them up in the way in which they should go, and from which they would never depart.

2. From the great influence of example, we learn why executive officers so often fail in the discharge of their trusts. There is a great and visible neglect of putting into execution the laws of the land. It is true, the laws respecting property are strictly executed; but the laws against vice are allowed to

sleep in silence. Executive officers have the same authority, and are bound by the same solemn obligation, to execute the laws against immorality, as those against fraud and injustice. Why then do they neglect to execute the former, rather than the latter? The cause is obvious. The voice of example commands them to defend men's lives and properties; but the same formidable voice forbids them to suppress their fashionable vices.

But besides the general example in favor of vice, there is the particular example of negligent officers, which those who wish to execute the laws are afraid to resist. And hence they cast the blame of their own negligence upon the negligence of others. They say, it is impossible for a few to suppress the prevalence of vice, when the most, in number and influence, neglect the duties of their office. The truth of this assertion cannot be denied. For judges, justices, sheriffs, constables, and tithingmen, are become extremely negligent in the discharge of their respective trusts. They not only neglect to execute, but personally violate the laws of the land. And their own example, as well as the example of the people, forbids them to execute those laws which condemn their own evil conduct. This general example of rulers and of people is the greatest obstacle in the way of executing the laws against open immoralities, and is the only excuse which executive officers can plead for the neglect of their duty. But will God, whose ministers they are, allow the validity of their excuse? Will that which increases, lessen their obligations to fidelity? Will the crying vices of the times stifle the accusing voice of conscience? Will their being highly esteemed among men prevent their being an abomination in the sight of God? Or will the dreadful fruits of their negligence, hereafter yield them the least consolation? If executive officers cannot render a better reason for their negligence than the force of bad example, they may be assured that their negligence will be bitter in the latter end, and their elevation in this life will terminate in shame and contempt in the life to come. Be wise, ye judges and rulers, and fulfil your sacred trusts, or ye will finally fall under the condemnation and wrath of the Judge of all the earth.

3. We learn from the great influence of example, why it is so difficult for any not to deviate from the path of virtue. Example leads many great, and good, and strong men astray. Those who are sober, virtuous, and even pious, are often overcome, by the force of example, to say and do things which they resolve not to say and do in their calm and retired hours. Joseph did not allow himself in profaneness, yet it seems the

example of courtiers sometimes led him to use profane oaths. Solomon was a wise and good man, but example led him astray. The patriarchs and many of the kings of Israel were good men, but example betrayed them into polygamy. The common people in Israel were generally inclined to obey the commands of God externally, but the example of their kings, and of neighboring nations, often seduced them to the worship of idols. It was example which led many of the common people to despise and reject the Saviour. "Have any of the rulers or of the pharisees believed on him?" was the question they asked; and the answer determined their conduct, because they were unable to resist the force of example. Why do so many sober, and even pious men, indulge themselves in vain and unprofitable conversation on the Sabbath? Is it not chiefly owing to the example of the company into which they unhappily fall? Why do so many temperate men, on public days, sit and drink with the intemperate? Is it not to be imputed to the alluring force of example? Or why do christians in general so often symbolize with the world? Is it not because the strength of example surpasses the strength of their virtue? The propensity to follow bad examples is the greatest weakness that the strongest and best of men find about them. Were it not for this weakness, there would be many more shining characters in the world in general, and in this place in particular.

4. We learn from the great influence of example the importance of avoiding bad company. It is the example of the vicious which renders their company dangerous. Those who mean to conduct well themselves might safely frequent the worst of company, if they had only strength of virtue to resist the power of example. But none have this strength of virtue, and therefore none can safely frequent the company of the vicious. Example has a most secret and insinuating influence. Milton ingeniously conjectures that Satan employed this artful method to seduce our first parents. It is certain, however, that their posterity are extremely subject to the secret and delusive power of example. A looseness of thought, a looseness of speech, a looseness of conduct, in others, very insensibly warps our sentiments and corrupts our hearts. We are always apt to imagine, that we may safely conform to our company, with a little reserve, or some small restrictions. When we observe others say and do certain things, without any apprehension of guilt, we are ready to ask, why is it wrong, or why is it improper, for us to say and do the same? So the child argues; so the youth; and even so the man of gray hairs. Such thoughts of foolishness are sin. And there is no way to avoid them, but to avoid bad company.

5. We learn from the great influence of example, that no man can live in the world, without doing either good or hurt to others, as well as to himself. Many vicious persons neither lie, nor cheat, nor steal, nor rob, and therefore console themselves with the thought, that they are harmless members of society, and injure nobody but themselves. This, however, is a great mistake. No man lives unobserved, and no man's example is without some effect. Every man's general conduct fixes his general character; and his general character has either a good or bad influence upon all around him. Indeed, every man means to set an example, and he never fails of doing it. Some mean to set good examples. Some mean to set bad examples. And some mean to set the example of mere negative virtue, by barely shunning infamous vice. But there are, in reality, no negative examples. They are all either good or evil, and have either a good or evil effect on somebody or other. Every man, therefore, whilst he lives in the world, has some influence in making it either better or worse, by his own example. And hence every man does either good or evil to others, as well as to himself.

6. From the wide influence of example, we learn the account which great men will have to give for the use of it. The example of the great has the greatest influence; and this influence they ought to improve for the glory of God, and the benefit of the world. The high, the rich, the learned, and the aged, are eminently men of influence. These men, in every society, nation, and kingdom, govern the mass of the people more by the power of example, than by any other power. Joshua and the elders were the men of influence among the Israelites. And accordingly we are told, that "Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua." The king very often forms the court, and the court the rest of the nation. King Charles II. spread corruption through all orders, ranks and classes of the kingdom. The force of example is the same in all nations and in all places. A few men of influence in a nation govern the nation. A few men of influence in every state govern the state. A few men of influence in every town govern the town. And a few men of influence in every society govern the society. The men of influence possess a great and dangerous talent. And if they duly considered the great account which they must hereafter give for their use of it, they would be more solicitous to improve, than to increase their influence. Men of influence are under the highest obligations to set good examples. And they ought to esteem it a privilege, when a fair opportunity opens, to throw the weight of their example into

the scale of virtue. This frequently happens in all places. It now happens in this. Let me ask then, why some in this place have neglected to unite their influence with that of others, for the reformation of morals? Can you answer it to God, if you continue practically to oppose the virtuous, and to countenance the vicious? You may choose to be neuters, but neuters you cannot be, either in the view of God or man. Your neglect is an example, and an example which has great influence, not to promote, but to prevent a reformation of morals.

7. From the great influence of example, we learn how easy it is to effect a reformation of morals among any people. Example alone will do it. This is a very easy and unexceptionable way. If men of influence among any people would only set good examples themselves, they would insensibly and gradually promote a reformation of morals. There are a few in every town and parish, who carry the power of reformation in their own conduct. Let them but uniformly conduct worthy of imitation, and others will voluntarily and cheerfully tread in their steps. This may be illustrated by the article of dress. Let the wealthiest persons in this place only agree to wear their own manufactures, and strictly conform to their agreement, and they would soon establish the fashion of wearing our own manufactures here. Not the example of neighboring towns, not the example of Boston, nay, not the example of all the world besides, would be sufficient to destroy the influence of the leading men in this place. Every society are independent in regard to their own customs and fashions, and always submit to the example of a few leading characters among themselves, in those particular points. This is exemplified by the sect called the Friends. Not that I would recommend them as perfect patterns of dress. They doubtless go to an extreme in singularity. But certainly any people might avoid the extravagance of fashion, as well as they can avoid all the varieties of it. The youth in this place are not so much governed, in their fashions, by the example of other places, as by the example of a few in this. If this few, therefore, would set a good example, in this respect, they would easily bring into discredit and disuse many superfluities and fopperies of dress, which begin to increase and prevail.

And what has been said respecting the extravagance of fashions, will equally apply to any other vice or immorality. Example alone would suppress it. The example of a few, in this place, would reform the vices which begin to prevail among us. We have the power of reformation in our own hands. And this power might be exerted without the least offence or expense, and with all desirable success. How inex-

cusable, therefore, must those be, who neglect to pursue this easy and effectual mode of reformation!

8. If the force of example be so great as we have represented, then it certainly concerns reformers in particular to set good examples. This is the principal method by which they can reach their desired purpose. And the want of their own good examples will effectually frustrate all other methods they can possibly use, for the reformation of morals. The eyes of all will be upon their conduct. If they act up to their profession, it will give energy both to their profession, and to all their exertions for the suppression of vice. They must cast the beam out of their own eye, before they offer to cast the mote out of another's eye. They must heal themselves, before they attempt to heal others. In all their attempts for a reformation, they must act under the shield of their own bright example. With this armor, they may safely attack the strong holds of vice, and bid defiance to all the impotent arrows of obloquy and reproach. They must set an example of all virtue; but especially of those particular virtues, which stand in opposition to the particular vices, which they wish to reform. And here, I beg leave to mention a few examples, which it highly concerns them to exhibit.

Punctuality is a virtue of great importance in society; and the want of it is a source of innumerable disadvantages and embarrassments. One small disappointment may prove the occasion of twenty or fifty great ones. Let reformers, to cure this evil, observe the strictest punctuality in all their promises and appointments.

The due observance of the Sabbath greatly tends to promote christian knowledge, piety, and virtue among a people. And this duty is more promoted by the law of example, than by any other law. People in general govern their conduct on the Sabbath, not according to the word of God or the law of the land, but according to the law of example. They mean to attend public worship every Sabbath, if they see those above them attend it every Sabbath. They mean to attend public worship both parts of the day, if they see those above them attend it both parts of the day. They mean to take their places in the house of God before public exercises begin, if they see those above them set them the example. They mean, after public worship is over, to visit their own habitations, and spend the remainder of the day in retirement, if they observe this to be the practice of their superiors in age, knowledge and reputation. Let reformers, therefore, remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy, and, by their own example, restrain others from the outward profanation of it.

The wise and profitable improvement of time is the best antidote against sinful diversions. The habit of industry destroys the habit of idleness, and when the habit of idleness is destroyed, the propensity to vain and sinful diversions is cured. Hence Paul, to cure the Thessalonians of their idle habits, made himself an example of industry. Let reformers therefore follow his example, that theirs may restrain others from idleness and vanity.

It is the very business of reformers to employ the power of laws in their service. They ought to improve the advantage which our great and wise men have put into their hands. They ought to display the same virtue in executing, which was displayed in framing the laws against vice. And to encourage you in the prosecution of your duty, I have a right to observe, that some of you have already set a good example, and merited the public approbation. Be not weary in well-doing, but persevere in every laudable method for the suppression of vice. You have every possible motive to animate you in your arduous but noble undertaking. For the approbation of God, the applause of the virtuous, and the gratitude of the reformed, will be your sure and ample reward. Amen.

SERMON V.

SINFUL CUSTOMS.

SEPTEMBER 2, 1793.

THE Lord pardon thy servant in this thing. — 2 Kings, v. 18.

THESE are the words of Naaman, the Syrian, on a very remarkable occasion. He had just been miraculously cured of his leprosy, by washing seven times in Jordan, at the direction of Elisha. Though at first he despised this simple remedy, yet when he found that it had completely removed his loathsome disease, he altered his opinion of the prophet, and wished to reward him amply for his kindness. Accordingly "he returned from Jordan to the man of God, he and all his company, and came and stood before him: And he said, Behold, now I know there is no God in all the earth but in Israel: Now therefore I pray thee, take a blessing of thy servant. But he said, As the Lord liveth, before whom I stand, I will receive none. And he urged him to take it; but he refused. And Naaman said, Shall there not then, I pray thee, be given to thy servant two mules burden of earth? For thy servant will henceforth offer neither burnt-offering nor sacrifice unto other gods, but unto the Lord. In this thing the Lord pardon thy servant, that when my master goeth into the house of Rimmon to worship there, and he leaneth on my hand, and I bow myself in the house of Rimmon; when I bow down myself in the house of Rimmon, the Lord pardon thy servant in this thing."

Naaman was a great and valiant general, who had commanded the armies of the king of Syria, and delivered his kingdom from surrounding enemies. He stood high in the favor of his prince. He was his prime minister. He attended him

at his public devotions, as well as at his other public appearances. And after his mind had taken a religious turn, he was still willing to serve both his God and his king; but he was not willing to oppose sinful customs. This threw him into great embarrassment. Though he could lavish his treasure on the prophet, and though he could expose his life in the field of battle, yet he could not summon sufficient resolution and courage to attack those reigning customs, which he verily believed to be wrong. He felt as though he must renounce the service of the God of Israel, unless the God of Israel would allow him to tolerate, and in some measure comply with the sinful customs of his country. "The Lord pardon thy servant in this thing. I beg, I entreat that I may be excused from opposing sinful customs. I know their strength. I know the danger of attacking them. I may lose my office, and what I still more dread, I shall certainly lose the love and respect of my fellow men. I must be excused from this hazardous, and I fear fruitless attempt. Require me to do any thing else, and I will cheerfully do it, at the risk of my fortune or my life; but in this thing pardon and excuse thy servant." So Naaman felt. And he felt just as other men feel. Hence the general observation is this:

Every body desires to be excused from opposing sinful customs.

I shall show, first, that every body desires to be excused from this; and then, that nobody can be excused from it.

I. I am to show, that every body desires to be excused from opposing sinful customs.

This truth needs but a very little proof. It carries its own evidence to every one, who has attended to the exercises of his own mind. Though men may differ in their opinions about some customs, yet there are many customs, which all believe to be sinful. All therefore have had an opportunity of knowing their own minds upon this subject. And were all to speak the real language of the heart, they would unanimously say, that they have often felt a strong reluctance to opposing sinful customs. "As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man." All feel as Naaman felt, unwilling to combat sinful customs, and wish to be excused from the disagreeable task. This will more fully appear, if we consider,

1. That every body is apt to neglect opposing sinful customs. Men will often and readily oppose sinful actions. But do we find them equally ready and forward to oppose sinful customs? Are they not very apt to connive at practices which custom has long sanctioned? Even those who are very careful to avoid all appearances of evil themselves, are very negli-

gent as to opposing sinful customs in others. But why are men so generally and almost universally negligent in this particular? Can it arise from any thing but a strong desire in every one, to be excused from opposing sinful customs?

2. Men are unwilling to unite in opposing sinful customs. This is sometimes proposed; but how generally is the proposal rejected! We have actually made the experiment. A few have had virtue and resolution enough to overcome the natural reluctance to such a hazardous undertaking. They have invited others to unite their exertions in opposing sinful customs; but the greater part have declined. And should the same proposal be made through the land, it is more than probable that a very great majority would desire to be excused, and refuse to join in such an important and benevolent design. This is another evidence, that every body naturally desires to be excused from opposing sinful customs. I may add,

3. Those who have resolved and engaged to oppose sinful customs are extremely prone to come short of fulfilling their resolutions and engagements. Though they are really sincere in their resolutions and attempts, yet upon trial, they find a strong desire to be excused in this, in that, and the other instance. To will is present, but how to perform they find not. It requires more self-denial and fortitude, to oppose customs which have been long established, than any can imagine, before they have made the attempt. Hence the best of men, and the boldest reformers, have neglected to perform this arduous and disagreeable task.

Asa was a good man, and a great reformer; but there were some sinful customs in his day, which were so formidable, that he dared not oppose them. "And Asa did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, as did David his father. And he took away the Sodomites out of the land, and removed all the idols that his father had made. And also Maachah his mother, even her he removed from being queen, because she had made an idol in a grove; and Asa destroyed her idol, and burned it by the brook Kidron. But the high places were not removed." We have the same account of his son. "And Jehosaphat the son of Asa began to reign over Judah in the fourth year of Ahab king of Israel. And he walked in all the ways of Asa his father, he turned not aside from it, doing that which was right in the eyes of the Lord: Nevertheless the high places were not taken away; for the people offered and burnt incense yet in the high places." There were two sorts of high places in Israel. One sort was devoted to the service of the true God, and the other sort was devoted to the service of idols. The high places devoted to the service of the true God

were allowed before the temple was built; but after that was built, Jerusalem was the only place where men ought to worship. And though the reformers destroyed the high places devoted to the service of idols, yet they were afraid to destroy the high places devoted to the service of the true God. The people had been so long and so generally accustomed to meet in these before they were forbidden, that after they were forbidden they still persisted in their old custom. And this old and venerable custom the boldest reformers wanted resolution and fortitude to oppose.

The bold and zealous Peter was afraid to oppose a custom which was once lawful, but had become sinful. It was once lawful for the Jews to abstain from eating with the Gentiles; but after the gospel was published, this bar of separation was taken down, and the believing Jews had no right to follow this custom any longer. But Peter, through fear of reproach, followed this sinful example, for which Paul sharply rebuked him. So he tells us in the 2d of Galatians. "But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed: for before that certain came from James he did eat with the Gentiles; but when they were come he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation." So formidable are long-established customs, that the most bold and zealous reformers are afraid to oppose them. And this shows in the clearest manner that every body desires to be excused from opposing sinful customs. But I proceed to show, as proposed,

II. That nobody can be excused from it.

Naaman desired to be excused, but there is no evidence that God excused him. I know the prophet said unto him, "Go in peace." But he did not ask the prophet to excuse him. He addressed his petition to God, who alone had a right to excuse him. "The Lord pardon thy servant in this thing." This request probably struck the prophet very disagreeably, and therefore he said ironically, "Go in peace. If it seem evil to serve the God of Israel, and oppose ceremonies and customs, which dishonor his name, go worship in the house of Rimmon, or wheresoever you please. I have no more to say to you. You cannot serve God and mammon. And if you will not renounce mammon you must renounce God, who never will indulge you in conniving at sinful customs." This leads me to observe,

1. That God will excuse none from opposing sinful customs. Though he knows that all wish to be excused, yet their wishes will not move him to excuse them from a plain duty. They

evidently ought to honor and glorify their Maker, and of consequence to oppose and restrain whatever tends to his dishonor. But sinful customs certainly tend to dishonor God, and wound his cause and interest in the world. And besides, God has clearly revealed his mind on this subject. He has expressly said to every person, "Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil." He has expressly said, "Be not conformed to this world." He has expressly said, "The friendship of the world is enmity with God." He has expressly said, "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them." And again he has expressly said, "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy brother, and not suffer sin upon him." After God has laid such solemn injunctions on men to avoid and oppose sinful customs, they must be guilty of the greatest presumption, to imagine that the Lord will pardon or excuse them, if they neglect their duty in this thing.

2. Christ will not excuse any from opposing sinful customs. He is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, and changeth not. He came into the world to condemn sin in the flesh. When he was in the world he loved righteousness and hated iniquity. And while he lived among sinful customs, he uniformly and strenuously opposed them. He began his ministry by preaching against what had been said and done by them of old time. He attacked without fear or favor the reigning sinful customs of the Jewish nation. They had a sinful custom of putting away their wives without any just cause; this he condemned and opposed. They had a sinful custom of swearing by the earth, by heaven, and by Jerusalem; this he condemned and opposed. They had a sinful custom of calling hard names; this he condemned and opposed. They had a sinful custom of abusing their aged parents, by taking what ought to be expended for their support, and dedicating it to religious uses; this he condemned and opposed. They had a sinful custom of profaning the temple, by buying and selling in it; this he condemned and destroyed. And they had a sinful custom of treating all other nations with neglect and contempt; this he condemned and reproved, by the parable of the Jew and Samaritan. In short, it appears to have been a peculiar object with Christ to oppose all sinful customs. And if this was his own feeling and practice, we may presume that he will never excuse any from this most reasonable and important duty.

3. Those who follow sinful customs will not excuse any from opposing them. The time is coming when their consciences will be awakened, and they will see things in a true light.

And whenever this time comes, whether before, at, or after death, they will not excuse those who neglected to restrain and reclaim them. Of this they have often given abundant evidence. How many unhappy creatures at the gallows have condemned those who neglected to oppose their wicked practices. How many vicious persons, on their death-beds, have bitterly upbraided their ministers, their parents, and their friends, for winking at their vices, and neglecting to oppose their sinful customs. And all who are now pursuing evil courses will, sooner or later, upbraid those who neglect to oppose and restrain their vices. Though at present, they love and caress those who indulge and countenance them in their evil ways, yet when they come to have just views of things, they will see the sin and folly of others, as well as their own presumption and guilt. And as they will not be able to excuse themselves, so they will not be able to excuse those who had excused them. But of all men, they will become the bitterest accusers and upbraiders of all who neglect the duty of opposing sinful customs.

It must be observed in the last place,

4. That none can excuse themselves from opposing sinful customs. It is a duty, a plain duty, which approves itself to every one's conscience. All know that they ought to oppose whatever opposes the glory of God, the good of society, and the eternal happiness of mankind. And all know that sinful customs have this malignant and destructive tendency. One sinner destroyeth much good. Evil pursueth sinners. He that pursueth evil, pursueth it to his own death. The wages of sin is death. Sinful customs have destroyed their thousands and ten thousands. To prevent such dreadful evils, must be the duty of every person, so far as his power and influence extend. Nor will any one's conscience excuse him, if he neglects this plain and important duty. Though men desire to be excused; though they devise arguments of excuse; and though the arguments they devise in their own defence may lead others to excuse them; yet nothing will effectually excuse them before their own enlightened consciences. For, "to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." And says Solomon, "if thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain; if thou sayest, behold, we knew it not: Doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it? And he that keepeth thy soul, doth not he know it? And shall he not render to every man according to his works?" Thus it appears that none can be excused from opposing sinful customs. God will not excuse them, nor Christ, nor sinners, nor their own consciences. It only re-

mains to apply the subject to the purpose for which we are convened.

1. We learn from what has been said, that there is nothing which men are more afraid of, than opposing sinful customs. Every body desires to be excused from this attempt; and this desire arises from fear. It requires no great strength, no great knowledge, no great expense, to oppose sinful customs. But it does require great courage and fortitude of mind. Here lies the only difficulty. But this difficulty is generally insurmountable. Men, who can brave the perils of the wilderness, the perils of war, and the perils of the sea, shrink back from the dangers of opposing sinful customs. The hardiest seaman is afraid to rebuke his comrade for blaspheming his Maker, and calling for the curses of Heaven to fall on his own soul. The bravest general, who has often led his army into the hottest battle, is afraid to reprimand his fellow officer, or to correct his fellow soldier, for a sinful custom. This is exemplified in Naaman. He would have scorned to be excused from exposing his life to the point of the sword. He would have blushed to turn his back upon the most dangerous station in the field of battle. But yet he beseeches the Lord to excuse him from opposing sinful customs, and exposing himself to the scorn of men. This was more than he had courage and fortitude to support. The danger of opposing sinful customs, therefore, is the danger of which the most of mankind are the most afraid.

2. We learn from what has been said, that there is nothing which more deserves the public esteem, than the opposing of sinful customs. If every body desires to be excused from this difficult and hazardous duty; and if few, very few, have virtue, zeal, and resolution enough to perform it, then it is one of the strongest expressions of self-denial. And for persons to deny themselves, in the tenderest point, and in the highest degree, for the public good, deserves the largest share of public applause.

Sinful customs are the greatest public evils. A thousand sinful actions are not so injurious to the public as one sinful custom. Sinful actions are transient; they produce their effects, and immediately cease. But a sinful custom is permanent, and may continue its destructive influence for ages. I will illustrate this by a single instance. It is that of playing cards. This sinful custom has continued for ages past, and may continue for ages to come. How many estates, how many characters, how many lives, and how many souls, has this sinful custom destroyed! And all sinful customs have a like extensive and destructive influence. Those, therefore, who dare to condemn and restrain sinful customs, do the greatest public good, and deserve the greatest public esteem. The

public are naturally grateful to their benefactors, when they discover them, and they generally do discover them sooner or later. Reformers, therefore, have generally been finally rewarded by the largest portion of public honors. Witness the rigid Cato, among the Romans; and the virtuous Asa, Hezekiah, Josiah, and Jehoiada, among the Jews.

3. We learn from what has been said, that nothing requires union more, than the attempt to oppose sinful customs. If every individual wants courage to make this attempt, then it especially requires the united aid of numbers. There is nothing like union among individuals, to inspire them with courage and zeal in any design whatever. It is the union of individuals that forms and preserves every sinful custom. Custom is not the effect of the few, but of the many. Whatever sinful practice the multitude pursue, is, for that very reason, a sinful custom. And as union forms sinful customs, so union alone can destroy them. A small number united by virtuous ties, can oppose and restrain a much larger number united only by the brittle bands of vice. It therefore highly concerns those who are engaged in opposing sinful customs, to be firmly and heartily united. They should with one voice speak the same things, and with one heart pursue the same measures. "Two are better than one, and a threefold cord is not quickly broken." This the vicious know, and this the virtuous ought to consider. If it be the policy and strength of the vicious to divide the virtuous; then it is the duty and strength of the virtuous to divide the vicious. And this, in a multitude of instances, may be easily done. The beginnings of vice are weak and timid. There are many, who, for a time, halt between two opinions, and stand in doubt which of two paths to pursue. These, by wise and prudent measures, may be easily detached from the veterans in vice, and deterred from the paths of the destroyer.

4. We learn from what has been said, that there is nothing more criminal than the approving and the supporting of sinful customs. It is a sin against God. It is a sin against man. And it is a sin against every person's own conscience. But the great and visible evils which flow from this sin, are the great and visible aggravations of it. Men may do much more mischief to the world, and much more injury to the cause of God, by approving and supporting, than by actually pursuing sinful customs. A sober, regular man, who avoids sinful customs himself, may do ten times more to spread and continue sinful customs, than the most artful and profligate wretch. And were it not for the countenance and support of such apparently sober, virtuous, and religious persons, all sinful customs would every where become contemptible. This is the fate of all practices which

no sober, honest, virtuous man approves. Thus, for instance, stealing is universally contemptible. The reason is, all sober, honest, good men, hold this vice in perfect abhorrence. And did all such men refuse their countenance and support to sinful customs, they would equally sink into universal contempt. Therefore, to approve and support sinful customs is one of the greatest of all sins.

5. We learn from what has been said, that it is utterly in vain for any to pretend to excuse themselves from opposing sinful customs. It is in vain to say, that they desire to be excused. It is in vain to say, that it will expose them to reproach and contempt. It is in vain to say, that it does not belong to them to make the attempt. It is in vain to say, that it will do no good to make the attempt. It is in vain to say, that others neglect this duty. It is, in short, in vain to say a single word, by way of excuse. For there is no excuse, which either God, or Christ, or sinners, or their own consciences, will accept. Hence,

6. This subject calls upon every person to oppose all customs, which he believes to be sinful. Men, as we have observed, may differ in their judgment of certain customs. But every man ought to oppose such customs as he believes to be sinful. And does not every person believe, that there are some sinful customs in this place?

Is not encroaching upon the Sabbath, a sinful custom? Is not profaning the Sabbath, a sinful custom? Is not profane swearing, a sinful custom? Is not gaming, a sinful custom? Is not frolicking, a sinful custom? Is not the custom, which has no name in the dictionary, but which is commonly called bundling, a sinful custom? Is not drinking to excess, a sinful custom? Is not extravagance in dress, a sinful custom? Is not the neglect of family devotion, a sinful custom? Is not the neglect of family government, a sinful custom? Is not the neglect of executing good laws, a sinful custom? Now let me ask, do not all these sinful customs abound in this land? And do not many of them, at least, abound in this place? If they do, it concerns all, according to their various ages, relations, and stations, to exert their power and influence, in opposing such sinful and destructive customs. In particular,

Ministers of the gospel ought to discountenance all prevailing vices. Though men differ in their opinions what doctrines ministers ought to preach and oppose; yet all are agreed, that they ought to preach all the civil, social, moral virtues, and to condemn and oppose every custom, which tends to destroy, or even weaken, their happy influence.

Civil rulers ought to be the fathers of their people, and the

guardians of their virtues, as well as of their rights and privileges. They are appointed to be a terror to evil-doers, and to employ the authority with which they are vested, in opposing and restraining sinful customs. And if they neglect their duty in this respect, they will deserve the character and contract the guilt of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin.

Professors of religion are bound, by the most solemn obligations, not only to depart from all iniquity themselves, but to rise up for God against evil-doers, and to stand up for him against the workers of iniquity. Instead of being conformed to the spirit of the world, they ought to be totally opposed to it; and by their example and influence, oppose all sinful customs.

Those who have engaged to oppose sinful customs have laid themselves under peculiar additional obligations, to attempt, and if possible to bring about, a reformation of morals. They have acknowledged this to be their duty, and have pledged their reputation to be faithful. They cannot turn to the right hand or to the left; they must pursue the path they have chosen, and, with unremitting ardor, prosecute the benevolent design they have so nobly undertaken. Having put their hand to the plough, they must never look back.

Those who have not engaged to oppose sinful customs, are under indispensable obligations to engage. Their duty does not depend on their inclination. If they desire to be excused, they cannot be excused. Their very desire is sinful, and instead of atoning for their negligence, betrays and aggravates their guilt. They may think themselves wise in declining to oppose sinful customs. But their wisdom is from below, and deserves all the epithets which the apostle has justly given it. They have excused themselves, but God has not excused them. And they are entreated to remember, that if they continue to neglect opposing sinful customs, sinful customs will oppose them, and prove their future and everlasting ruin.

If any, who are well disposed and wish to do their duty, should here ask what they must do to oppose sinful customs; it is easy to give them a number of directions, which being faithfully followed will insure success.

1. Avoid all sinful customs yourselves. When you see others pursuing them, never join with them, but practically condemn their sin and folly.

2. Establish good customs. This you may do, as well as others can establish evil ones. And this is one of the most effectual means of destroying sinful customs. Many fall into evil habits, simply because good ones are not exhibited before

them. And many who have addicted themselves to sinful customs may be reclaimed by the good examples of others.

3. Execute good laws. Our wisest and best politicians have been thoroughly convinced of the pernicious tendency of vice, and to prevent its baleful influence, have enacted a variety of laws to restrain men from vicious customs. These laws you have a right to see well executed. And it is your duty to appoint good executive officers, and to insist upon their faithfully discharging their trust.

4. Realize your obligations to God. It lies not at your option, whether you shall oppose sinful customs. God demands this at your hands. And you must soon give account before his awful bar, whether you have employed your talents, your opportunities, and your obligations for him, or against him; and whether the world has been the better or the worse, by your living in it. Let the fear of God be in your hearts, and you shall escape that dreadful snare, the fear of man. Amen.

SERMON VI.

NATIONAL PROSPERITY.

ANNUAL THANKSGIVING, DEC. 15, 1796.

And Judah and Israel dwelt safely, every man under his vine, and under his fig-tree, from Dan even to Beersheba, all the days of Solomon. — 1 Kings, iv. 25.

Sovereign princes have often raised their own greatness and grandeur upon the poverty and depression of their subjects. But Solomon pursued a more just, as well as a more wise and honorable course; and raised himself to the summit of human glory by seeking and promoting the highest happiness of his kingdom. The first and principal step which he took, to reach this noble and benevolent purpose, was to cultivate and maintain mutual peace with all the neighboring nations. He never gave them any just provocation to wage war with him; nor took any unjust occasion to wage war with them. This prudent and pacific conduct promoted the prosperity of his people; and at the same time spread the fame of his wisdom and policy among the greatest princes of the earth. Accordingly, the sacred historian first informs us that "Solomon had peace on all sides round about him." In the next words we are told, "Judah and Israel dwelt safely, every man under his vine and under his fig-tree, from Dan even to Beersheba, all the days of Solomon." And as the natural consequence of his wise and peaceful reign, we read in the conclusion of the chapter, "There came of all people to hear the wisdom of Solomon, from all the kings of the earth, which had heard of his wisdom." The hand as well as the counsel of the Deity was concerned in all this national prosperity. For God promised to give David a son and successor, who should be a prince of peace. "Behold, a son shall be born unto thee

who shall be a man of rest; and I will give him rest from all his enemies round about: For his name shall be Solomon, and I will give peace and quietness unto Israel, in his days." It appears from this prediction, that Solomon was only the instrument in the hand of God of promoting the peace and prosperity of his people. And taking our text in this connection, it naturally suggests this general observation:

It is God who bestows the great blessing of national peace.

To place this subject in a clear and profitable light, I shall show,

I. That it is God who bestows national peace: And

II. That national peace is a great national blessing.

I. I am to show that it is God who bestows national peace. This, God claims as his peculiar prerogative. "I form the light and create darkness: I make peace and create evil. I the Lord do all these things." Again we read, "The Lord sitteth king for ever. The Lord will give strength unto his people; the Lord will bless his people with peace." The voice of scripture here concurs with the voice of reason. National peace is one of the links in the great chain of providence, and of consequence comes under the divine direction. It belongs to God to determine when and where national peace shall be enjoyed. And it is easy to see how God can give this blessing to different nations, notwithstanding their native pride and selfishness. For,

1. God can make it the mutual interest of native and foreign nations to be at peace with each other. This was the case in the days of Solomon. By the instrumentality of David, God had delivered his people from their enemies, and put them in possession of all the land which he had promised to give them. This we are expressly told in the context. "And Solomon reigned over all the kingdoms, from the river unto the land of the Philistines, and unto the border of Egypt." The children of Israel had gained as large a territory, and secured as great advantages, as they had any grounds to expect, or even to desire. And on the other hand, their neighbors had no reason to flatter themselves, that it would be for their interest to attack the people of God, in their present state of strength and prosperity. All things, therefore, conspired with the policy of Solomon, to cultivate national peace. Just so God is able to unite the hearts of other nations, by uniting their interests. It has long been a maxim in politics, that national interest is the first principle of national policy. It is only for God, therefore, to make it the mutual interest of different nations to be at peace with each other, and they themselves will naturally seek and promote this agreeable object. Besides,

2. God is able to govern the hearts of nations, and in that way dispose them to mutual peace and harmony. It was a proverb in Israel, "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: He turneth it whithersoever he will." There is a supreme power in every nation; and the men who possess that power, have the right of making war or peace. But the hearts of those very men are in the hand of the Lord, who has a supreme control over all their views and designs. God standeth in the congregation of the mighty; and while they are deliberating upon the most important of all national concerns, he is able to turn their hearts, and voices, and exertions, to national peace. This power of disposing the hearts of nations to peace, God signally displayed, thrice every year, in his special providence towards the natural enemies of his chosen people. "Thrice in the year shall all your male children appear before the Lord God, the God of Israel. For I will cast out the nations before thee, and enlarge thy borders: Neither shall any man desire thy land, when thou shalt go up to appear before the Lord thy God thrice in the year." On those great occasions, God preserved his people from the power and depredation of their enemies, by actually disposing their hearts to peace. Indeed, national peace must always be ascribed to the mediate or immediate influence of the Deity upon the hearts of men. When any nation dwells safely, every man under his vine and under his fig-tree, they ought to consider this public blessing as coming from the hand and goodness of God. I proceed to show,

II. That national peace is a great national blessing.

So long as Solomon had peace on all sides round about him, it diffused universal happiness through his widely extended kingdom. National peace is naturally productive of the greatest national prosperity. This will appear, if we consider a variety of particulars.

1. National peace naturally tends to increase the numbers of a people. It was promised to Abraham as a great blessing, that his seed should be extremely numerous. This blessing is diminished by war, but promoted by peace. The seed of Abraham, at certain seasons, were "minished and brought low," by war and its natural attendants. But in times of peace they rapidly increased again. And perhaps they never increased with greater rapidity, than in the long and peaceful reign of Solomon. Accordingly, we are told in our context, that "Judah and Israel were many, as the sand which is by the sea in multitude." National peace preserved them from the sword and pestilence, which commonly go hand in hand, and make dreadful havoc of the lives of men. It is almost incredi-

ble how fast a people will increase in numbers, while they are free from public and wasting calamities. And the increase of numbers not only adds to the happiness of a people, but to the glory of their government. So Solomon thought, and so he said. "In the multitude of people is the king's honor: But in the want of people is the destruction of the prince." How valuable is national peace, which preserves the lives of millions, and adds millions to the numbers of a nation!

2. National peace directly tends to promote national wealth. Wealth is a temporal favor to nations, as well as to individuals, though it be often perverted and abused by both. Solomon says, "The blessing of the Lord it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it." Peace is the parent of wealth. For peace promotes industry, industry promotes commerce, and commerce promotes the wealth of any nation. The national peace, in the reign of Solomon, promoted a very extensive and lucrative commerce, which made both the prince and the people immensely rich. This the pen of inspiration has recorded, for the instruction of all future ages. "Now the weight of gold that came to Solomon in one year was six hundred three score and six talents, beside that he had of the merchant men, and of the traffic of the spice merchants, and of all the kings of Arabia, and of the governors of the country. The king had at sea a navy of Tarshish, with the navy of Hiram. Once in three years came the navy of Tarshish, bringing gold and silver, ivory, apes, and peacocks. So Solomon exceeded all the kings of the earth for riches. And the king made silver to be in Jerusalem as stones, and cedar made he to be as the sycamore trees that are in the vale for abundance." While a nation enjoys the blessing of peace, its individuals are at full liberty to cultivate the earth, and pursue every lucrative calling. Peace likewise opens the ports of numerous nations, and gives them a fair opportunity of exchanging the fruits of their own industry for the wealth of the world.

3. National peace has a happy influence upon every branch of human knowledge. Leisure and learning go together. While any people are free from the terrors and distresses of war, and are increasing in numbers and wealth, they have time and opportunity for turning their attention to mental improvements. The long and uninterrupted peace which Solomon enjoyed, was the happy occasion of the astonishing advances which he made in the various branches of science. He was no less celebrated for his knowledge, than for his wealth and magnificence. We are told, in the context, that "Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the East country, and

all the wisdom of Egypt. For he was wiser than all men; than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, and Chalcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol: And his fame was in all nations round about. And he spake three thousand proverbs: And his songs were a thousand and five. And he spake of trees, from the cedar-tree that is in Lebanon, even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall: he spake also of beasts, and of fowl, and of creeping things, and of fishes." The peace and prosperity of his kingdom, gave Solomon a happy opportunity of pursuing his own studies, and of encouraging the sons of science, to diffuse useful knowledge through every part of his extensive dominions. Learning never flourished but under the united influence of wealth and power. The Greeks and Romans became rich and powerful, before they had either leisure or inclination to turn their attention to the useful and liberal arts. But, after their conquests had put them in possession of wealth and peace, they carried agriculture, manufactures, commerce, architecture, poetry, sculpture, and painting, to a surprising degree of perfection. National peace has always had a tendency to promote national knowledge. The noblest works of genius, in the most refined nations of Europe, have been brought forth, not in the din of arms, but under the calm and auspicious influence of public peace. Hence the history of ages assures us, that the friends of science have commonly been the enemies of war.

4. National peace affords a favorable opportunity for forming public designs and performing public works. Every rising nation finds, that, in order to be happy as well as respectable, it must build cities, erect churches, endow colleges, open canals, make bridges, repair highways, remove public nuisances, and perform many other expensive works of general utility. To promote such national objects was highly reputable among the Romans, in the zenith of their prosperity. Pliny congratulates one of his friends upon being appointed a surveyor of the highways; an office to which he, and even Cæsar himself, had been promoted. It is only when nations are settled in peace, that they can form and execute public designs. One principal end which God had in view, in giving peace to Israel, in the reign of Solomon, was to afford them leisure to build the temple, and to perform other great and useful works, which should raise their dignity and glory in the sight of surrounding nations, and in the view of future ages. "And David said, Solomon my son is young and tender, and the house that is to be builded for the Lord must be exceeding magnifical, of fame and of glory throughout all countries. Then he called for Solomon his son, and charged him to build an house for the Lord God

of Israel. And David said to Solomon, My son, as for me, it was in my mind to build an house unto the name of the Lord my God: But the word of the Lord came to me, saying, Thou hast shed blood abundantly, and hast made great wars: Thou shalt not build an house unto my name, because thou hast shed much blood upon the earth in my sight. Behold, a son shall be born unto thee, who shall be a man of rest; and I will give him rest from all his enemies round about: For his name shall be Solomon, and I will give peace and quietness unto Israel in his days. He shall build an house for my name." The temple which Solomon built, was the most rich and magnificent structure that ever was raised by the hand of man. It was seven years in building; it daily employed above a hundred thousand workmen; and there was more gold and silver expended in adorning it, than is now in circulation in all the nations of Europe. And after he had finished this great work, he still went on to build cities and palaces, and to make Jerusalem, the seat of his kingdom, the metropolis of the world. Such vast and important designs were accomplished, in the long and peaceful reign of Solomon. And when any nation enjoys peace on all sides round about it, it has the fairest opportunity of forming and of executing designs of public utility and importance. In this view, national peace is highly conducive to the general good of every civil community.

5. It is the direct tendency of national peace to promote personal as well as public prosperity. There is no other national blessing so extensive in its kindly influence. It pervades every part of a nation, and yields a peculiar pleasure to high and low, rich and poor, young and old. It looks, with a mild and cheering aspect, upon every individual, and increases every other public and private blessing. In the peaceful reign of Solomon, all his subjects appeared to be in a state of real happiness and self-enjoyment. This is expressly mentioned as the fruit of national peace. "Judah and Israel were many, as the sand which is by the sea in multitude, eating, and drinking, and making merry." These expressions cannot mean carnal mirth and levity, but that serenity and cheerfulness of mind which God required his people to feel and express, in a state of outward prosperity. Universal peace diffuses universal joy through any community. While they dwell safely, and sit under their vines and fig-trees, none being able to make them afraid, they enjoy a train of pleasing reflections. The idea of safety, with respect to ourselves, our friends, and our country, is not only agreeable in its own nature, but it also gives a high relish to every other earthly enjoyment. Happy is that people

that is in such a case, that there is no breaking in, nor going out, and no complaining in the streets. This was the case of Israel, in the peaceful reign of Solomon. And this is the case of any nation which enjoys the blessing of universal peace. I may add,

6. National peace is very friendly to the interests of religion. During the peaceful reign of Solomon, religion greatly flourished. As soon as he was fixed upon the throne, he invited the people to go with him to Gibeon, where he offered sacrifices, and called upon God for wisdom to enable him to discharge the weighty duties which should devolve upon him in the course of his reign. His prayer was graciously heard and abundantly answered. When he had finished the temple, he consecrated it to the service of the Deity with great solemnity and devotion, which met the approbation of Heaven. Nor did he stop here; but by his example and authority promoted the regular and solemn worship of God in his house. "Then Solomon offered burnt-offerings unto the Lord upon the altar of the Lord which he had built before the porch, even after a certain rate every day, offering according to the commandment of Moses, on the sabbaths, and on the new moons, and on the solemn feasts three times in a year, even in the feast of unleavened bread, and in the feast of weeks, and in the feast of tabernacles. And he appointed, according to the order of David his father, the courses of the priests to their service, and the Levites to their charges, to praise and minister before the priests, as the duty of every day required. And they departed not from the commandment of the king unto the priests and Levites, concerning any matter." Such was the happy influence of national peace upon religion in Solomon's reign. And it had the same effect in the reigns of other pious and pacific princes. All the revivals of religion which we have an account of in the succeeding reigns were in times of national peace. Of Asa we are told, "In his days the land was quiet ten years. And Asa did that which was good and right in the eyes of the Lord his God. For he took away the altars of the strange gods, and the high places, and brake down the images, and cut down the groves, and commanded Judah to seek the Lord God of their fathers, and to do the law and commandment." His son Jehoshaphat was a great reformer, and promoted the cause of religion in a time of peace. Accordingly it is said, "The fear of the Lord fell upon all the kingdoms of the lands that were round about Judah, so that they made no war against Jehoshaphat." There was another revival of religion in Hezekiah's peaceful reign. And another after that, in the peaceful reign of Josiah. Indeed, public peace and true

religion have always promoted each other. It is the natural tendency of peace in any nation which enjoys divine revelation, to promote the interests of religion. And in this view especially, the reign of Solomon is represented by the Psalmist as a type of the future spread of religion, and prosperity of the church, under the reign of the Prince of Peace. "In his days shall the righteous flourish, and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth. He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him, and his enemies shall lick the dust. The kings of Tarshish and of the Isles shall bring presents; the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts. Yea, all kings shall fall down before him: all nations shall serve him." As soon as universal peace shall reign, and men shall beat their swords into plough-shares and their spears into pruning-hooks, this glorious prediction shall be fully accomplished. Our Saviour was born in a time of peace, and he shall reign in a time of peace. The peace of nations always has been and always will be highly favorable to the cause of religion. In a word, national peace serves to promote every national interest, and is the greatest of all national blessings.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. If peace be the greatest national blessing, then war is the greatest national calamity. War and peace are diametrically opposite to each other in their nature and tendency. War tends to destroy all that prosperity which peace tends to produce. War diminishes the numbers and wastes the wealth of nations. War obstructs the progress of science, and destroys the works of ages. War corrupts the hearts and lives of men, and wounds the interests of religion and morality. War spreads a general gloom over the beautiful face of nature, disturbs the peace and destroys the hopes of families, and pierces the bosoms of old and young with the keenest anguish and distress. It is impossible to paint the horrors of war and all its attendant miseries. It will appear in its truest light in contrast with the blessings of peace. And to view it in this dreadful light, we need only turn our eyes to Europe. It has there spilt the blood of millions. It has there trampled upon all laws, human and divine. It has there laid waste the labors and wisdom of ages. It has there spread ignorance, infidelity, vice, and misery, through a large portion of the globe. In a word, war is the calamity of calamities, and the greatest of all natural and national evils.

2. If peace be the greatest of national blessings, then it is

the wisdom of those who possess the supreme power in any nation, to promote and maintain this desirable and important object. Solomon was the greatest and wisest prince that ever swayed a royal sceptre. He was wiser than all men. The greatest princes admired his wisdom, and placed themselves as pupils at his feet. And this wisest of men and of princes was a prince of peace. He had a just sense of the importance of saving his people from the evils of war, and of turning their attention and exertions to the arts of peace. And through a long reign of forty years he maintained peace on all sides round about him, and raised his kingdom to the first rank among the kingdoms of men. This is a noble example, which it is not beneath the greatest princes and potentates of the earth to imitate. There is nothing of so much importance as war, that is commonly undertaken with so little coolness and prudence. It is much more frequently the result of folly than the fruit of wisdom. From whence come wars and fightings? Do they not too often come from the bitterest passions of human nature? It highly concerns those who hold the reins of government and carry in their hands the lives and interests of their subjects, to take good advice before they make war. This was Solomon's counsel and Solomon's conduct. Near the close of his reign some of his neighbors gave him just grounds of offence; but he had more wisdom than to chastise their insolence at the expense of the peace and prosperity of his own kingdom.

3. If it be the natural tendency of national peace to promote national prosperity, then it is the wisdom of a people to do all in their power to retain this invaluable blessing. A prosperous people are very prone to forget the source of their prosperity, and to become extremely stupid, avaricious, and revengeful. These are the passions which naturally enkindle the spirit of war. And when the spirit of war has inflamed and infatuated the minds of a people, they are deaf to the voice of reason and blind to the motives of interest. While they feel the powerful impulse of malignant passions, they would much rather sacrifice their own interest and happiness than fail to pour their vengeance on the head of their enemies. How often have all the powers engaged in war been heartily sorry, before they finished it, that they forsook the way of peace and spread their paths with misery and destruction! After the flame of war has once broken out, it is extremely difficult to restrain its fury until it has greatly weakened, diminished, and exhausted all the parties concerned. No people can suffer the spirit of war to seize their breasts, without exposing themselves to the folly and danger of adopting rash and precipitate measures, which

they will always have reason to regret. It is therefore the wisdom of any nation that enjoys the blessing of peace, to cultivate a cool and pacific spirit; and if possible, to avoid the horrors and calamities of war. The beginning of public as well as of private strife is as when one letteth out water; therefore let us, in this land of peace, leave off wars and fightings before they are meddled with.

4. We learn from what has been said, that we are under peculiar obligations to God for the bestowment and continuance of our national peace. For thirteen years past we have dwelt safely, sitting under our vines and fig-trees, none being able to make us afraid. Before this peaceful period commenced, we were engaged in a long and bloody contest with Britain. And though we established our independence and took a rank among the nations of the earth; yet at the close of the war we found ourselves in a miserable state of poverty, anarchy, and depression. But the happy return of peace soon revived our hopes, enlarged our views, and awakened our attention to the national interest. Particular states reviewed and revised their particular forms of government. This wise and prudent measure naturally led them to devise and adopt another, of still greater importance; which was, to frame a federal constitution, that should give them a national capacity, and secure their national interests. And as soon as this new and excellent government was established, it put a new face upon all our public affairs. It spread a spirit of industry and enterprise through all parts of the Union. And it is almost incredible, what wonders we have wrought by our united and vigorous exertions. How many new plantations have we made! How many cities have we founded! How many large and costly bridges have we constructed! How many useful and expensive canals have we opened! How many manufactories have we set up! How many well-regulated schemes of commerce have we devised and adopted! How many colleges and seminaries of learning have we erected! How many public libraries have we collected! And how many men of science have we raised up and qualified for public usefulness! Nor have we altogether neglected the great interests of religion. For while we have been increasing in numbers we have been extending our settlements over vast tracts of our newly acquired territory, where we have carried the gospel, planted new churches, and supplied many of them with able and faithful pastors. Ever since the ravages of war have ceased and the blessing of peace has come upon us, we have rapidly increased in numbers, in wealth, in knowledge, and in every thing which is really conducive to national prosperity.

And now, all this is ultimately owing to the Supreme Governor of the Universe, who has been pleased to bless our nation with peace. We have more than once been threatened with internal convulsions and foreign invasions. But through the blessing of God upon the wise, prudent, and pacific measures of our political father, we have happily maintained peace on all sides round about us; while other nations have been groaning under the complicated miseries of war. We stand surrounded and distinguished by the blessings of Heaven. God has crowned the closing year with his goodness, and plentifully supplied us with the bounties of his providence. We are become numerous as the sand which is by the sea in multitude. A pleasing prospect lies before us. We see our friends, our neighbors, and our countrymen, eating, and drinking, and making merry. The voice of peace, of health, and of plenty, is heard from Dan even to Beersheba; from one end of our land to the other. Never perhaps had we more occasion of gratitude to our sovereign and kind Benefactor, than on this present auspicious anniversary. We have abundant reason to call upon our souls and all that is within us to bless and praise the Lord for all his goodness and wonderful works to our peaceful and prosperous nation. And here two very serious and weighty considerations naturally occur, to press upon our minds the duty of gratitude for our national peace.

First, If we are ungrateful for this distinguishing favor of God, we shall justly provoke him to destroy our prosperity and chastise our ingratitude, by the hand of our enemies. This was the method which he took to punish his own peculiar people, for murmuring and complaining under the happy and peaceful reign of Solomon. As soon as that great, and wise, and prudent prince was laid in his tomb, the state of his kingdom was suddenly and totally changed. The horrors of war succeeded the blessings of peace. The infatuated people placed Jeroboam the son of Nebat upon the throne of Israel, who corrupted and divided the nation, and finally involved them in the most unnatural and bloody war that they, or any other people ever experienced. In one day, and in one battle, five hundred thousand Israelites were slain by the hands of their brethren. In the same severe and exemplary manner, God is able to punish us, if we are ungrateful for our national prosperity. Though we are this day rejoicing in universal peace and security, yet, before another such joyful anniversary returns, we may hear the noise of warriors, and behold the distressing sight of garments rolled in blood. I would not, however, suggest that there is a probability of such a sudden transition from peace to war. But this we know to be true, there

is a dark cloud arising, which spreads a gloom over all our promising prospects. The nations of Europe are in arms, and some of them wish to disturb our peaceful and prosperous state of neutrality. And should we be unthankful to God for his distinguishing favors, and despise the hand of his justice, we may reasonably expect that blood and violence will be the fruit of our ingratitude and folly.

Besides, we ought to consider, in the second place, that nothing but sincere gratitude to the Author of all our mercies can secure us against the destructive influence of national prosperity. The bounties of Providence naturally tend to destroy an ungrateful people. Pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness, proved the ruin of the ungrateful inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah. National prosperity gradually brought on the declension and overthrow of the most renowned nations of antiquity. And before God had put his people in possession of the land of promise, he solemnly cautioned them against the dangers of peace and prosperity. "Beware lest when thou hast eaten and art full, and hast built goodly houses and dwelt therein; and when thy herds and thy flocks multiply, and thy silver and thy gold is multiplied, and all that thou hast is multiplied; then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the Lord thy God, and say in thine heart, My power, and the might of mine hand, hath gotten me this wealth. If thou do at all forget the Lord thy God, I testify against you this day, that ye shall surely perish." But notwithstanding this seasonable and solemn admonition to gratitude, the peace and prosperity of Israel from time to time corrupted their morals, destroyed their religion, and exposed them to the severest marks of the divine displeasure. Human nature is still the same; and national power and wealth may have the same fatal influence upon us, that they have had upon other nations of the earth. Let us therefore maintain a deep and habitual sense of the great and distinguishing goodness of God towards our rising and flourishing republic, that it may be a lengthening out of our public peace and tranquillity. May these serious and interesting motives to gratitude deeply affect all our hearts, and excite us to give unto God the glory which is due to his name, for our national prosperity. Amen.

SERMON VII.

PRAYER FOR THE DEFEAT OF THOSE WHO ATTEMPT TO SUBVERT GOOD GOVERNMENT.

NATIONAL FAST, MAY 9, 1798.

And David said, O Lord, I pray thee, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness. — 2 Samuel, xv. 31.

Though God condescended to frame a civil constitution for his own people, and to take the administration of it into his own hands; yet they soon became weary of his immediate superintendency, and requested him to grant them a king, that they might be like the nations round about them. In righteous displeasure, he granted their request, and anointed Saul to reign over them, who proved a severe scourge for their ingratitude and folly. But Saul's successor was a man after his own heart, whom he chose and appointed in mercy to Israel. Accordingly we read, "He chose David his servant, and took him from the sheep-folds, from following the ewes great with young, and brought him to feed Jacob his people, and Israel his inheritance. So he fed them according to the integrity of his heart; and guided them by the skilfulness of his hands." At this time the people of God certainly enjoyed a government wisely constructed and faithfully administered; and yet they were guilty of the ingratitude and presumption of forming a conspiracy against it. This conspiracy was concerted, and carried on, by the art and intrigue of one of the king's own sons. Absalom, who had a graceful appearance, and an insinuating address, stole away the hearts of the people from David his father. Having detached their affections from their rightful and faithful sovereign, he despatched emissaries into all parts of the nation, to prepare them for a general revolt.

And the better to succeed in usurping the throne of Israel, he sent for Ahithophel his father's counsellor; and having gained him over to his party, it is said, "The conspiracy was strong; for the people increased continually with Absalom." All this was done before the king had the least intimation of the traitor's design. At length, "There came a messenger to David, saying, the hearts of the men of Israel are after Absalom. And David said unto all his servants that were with him at Jerusalem, Arise and let us flee: for we shall not else escape from Absalom: make speed to depart, lest he overtake us suddenly, and bring evil upon us, and smite the city with the edge of the sword." Agreeably to this resolution, David with his family and friends, together with the Levites, immediately left the city; and amidst the cries and lamentations of multitudes, passed over the brook Kidron. There they made a stand, and consulted together upon the most proper measures to be pursued, in order to save themselves and the kingdom from ruin. Having come to a determination, they moved forward, with slow and solemn step, toward mount Olivet, "weeping as they went up." In this distressing hour, "One told David, saying, Ahithophel is among the conspirators. And David said, O Lord, I pray thee, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness." This was the most pious and pertinent petition that could have flowed from the heart and lips of David, on such an occasion. His own situation, and the situation of his kingdom, called aloud for the peculiar interposition of the Deity, to defeat the malignant counsels of the enemies of good government. Hence every one will naturally draw this just conclusion,

That it is proper for a people, under a good government, to pray that God would defeat the designs of those who are aiming to subvert it.

To illustrate this subject, I shall,

I. Briefly describe a good government.

II. Inquire who may be said to be aiming to subvert such a government. And

III. Show the propriety of praying that the designs of such persons may be defeated.

I. I am briefly to describe a good government.

Some suppose that one form of government is as good as another, provided it be equally well administered. If this opinion could be admitted, all observations upon this head would be entirely superseded. But there is no foundation to imagine that the goodness or badness of any government depends solely upon its administration. It must be allowed, that the ultimate design of civil government is to restrain the

corruptions of human nature. And since human nature is the same at all times and in all places, the same form of government which is best for one nation is best for all nations, if they would only agree to adopt it. Hence politicians may arrive at as great perfection in the art of government as in any other art which is founded on the principles of human nature. As all mankind are naturally selfish, so it is necessary that every individual in every civil community should be constrained to act in consistency with the general good of the whole. That form of government, therefore, which is the best calculated to promote the general good of the people, is absolutely perfect in its kind. Were a set of rulers to frame a constitution to suit themselves, they would be apt to frame it so as to promote their own interest, in opposition to the interest of the people. Were a particular people to frame a constitution to suit themselves, they would be apt to frame it so as to promote their own interest, in opposition to the interest of the rulers. But were a number of enlightened and judicious statesmen to frame a constitution, in which they were never to be personally interested, they would aim to combine the interests of high and low, of rich and poor, of rulers and subjects; that is, they would mean to promote the general good of the whole community. This is the supreme and ultimate end, which ought to be proposed in every constitution of government. But since a government so constructed will necessarily cross the private interests of all individuals, it is farther necessary that it should provide for its own support, independently of the people. Just so far as any civil constitution allows the people to assist or control their rulers; just so far it is weak, deficient, and contains the seeds of its own dissolution. For while the people are making laws, they are lawless; and while they are advising or directing their rulers, they cease to be ruled. A civil constitution ought to resemble a good time-piece. A good clock, for instance, will constantly and regularly move of itself, if it be only wound up, from day to day, or from week to week. So a good constitution will support itself, without requiring any thing more of the people, than barely their setting it in motion, and choosing their own rulers, at a prescribed time, and in a prescribed manner. After a government is duly constructed, adopted, and organized, it must stand perpetually, unless it be subverted, either by the tyranny of the rulers, or the rebellion of the subjects, or the violence of foreign enemies. For it is absurd to suppose that any good constitution of government should make provision for its own destruction. It is the great design of a constitution to draw a circle around both rulers and people, and to fix the bounds within which both may law-

fully move. Whilst it limits the power of rulers, it forms the mass of the people into one body, and forbids them any longer to act as detached individuals. Neither ruler nor subject, under a good constitution of government, has a right to take one step out of his own sphere. So that if either ruler or subject lifts his hand against the constitution itself, or does any thing with a design to weaken or destroy it, he acts the part of a traitor, and deserves to be treated as such. I proceed,

II. To inquire who may be said to be aiming to overthrow a good government.

There is such a great diversity in the natural abilities, acquired knowledge, local situations, and temporal interests of mankind, that it is not to be expected they should be perfectly agreed in their political sentiments. Individuals, therefore, may be good subjects of a good government, though they should really think that its constitution is not so perfect as it might be; or that those in administration do not in all cases conduct public affairs so well as they might conduct them. But we may justly consider those as aiming to subvert the government, who endeavor to alienate the affections of the people from it. This was the method which Absalom pursued, in order to take the kingdom out of his father's hands into his own. He used every artifice to steal away the hearts of the people from their just and rightful sovereign. And yet he had the address to keep his ultimate design out of the view of the public, until he was fully persuaded that he was able to accomplish it. The two hundred men who escorted him to Hebron, where he actually seized the reigns of government, "went in their simplicity, and knew not any thing" of his treasonable designs. These he had disclosed to none but his emissaries and friends, whom he had effectually secured in his favor. But it was true, all the while he was caressing the people he carried a dagger in his heart, and was ultimately meditating to subvert his father's kingdom, and destroy both him and his friends. Korah, another traitor, employed the same kind of artifice and intrigue, to raise a mutiny in the congregation of Israel. He endeavored to detach the affections of the people from Moses and Aaron, their constituted leaders. He first inspired Dathan and Abiram with a murmuring and seditious spirit. These persons instilled the same spirit into the minds of two hundred and fifty princes of the assembly, famous in the congregation. "And all these gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron, and said unto them, Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them: wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the Lord?" Having heard this complaint,

Moses called upon them to come, and refer their cause to the divine decision. But they utterly refused, and boldly said, "We will not come up. Is it a small thing that thou hast brought us up out of the land which floweth with milk and honey, to kill us in the wilderness, except thou make thyself altogether a prince over us?" Thus they presumed to accuse Moses of aiming at absolute monarchy, though he was the meekest man in the world, and had never, in a single instance, stretched his power beyond its proper limits. But they knew that nothing could be more directly calculated to alienate the affections of the people from him, than this false and groundless insinuation. And if they could only gain this point, they did not doubt of overturning both their civil and religious constitutions, which was really their ultimate design. Though their views were base and detestable, yet their reasoning was just and conclusive; for those who are able to detach the affections of the people from their government, are able to overthrow it. Indeed, this is the way, and the only possible way of overturning a good government, without the force of arms. Notwithstanding the means and the end in this case seem to be remote from each other, yet they are very naturally and certainly connected. Accordingly, when we find any description of men insidiously endeavoring to alienate the affections of the people from their government, we have no room to doubt of their malevolent and traitorous designs. They are certainly seeking the power of bringing about a revolution of government; and should they attain that power, we may presume they will employ it for that purpose. It is not to be expected that such persons will avow their object; but notwithstanding all their evasive language, their conduct declares them to be enemies of the government under which they live, and actually aiming to subvert it. It only remains to show,

III. The propriety of praying that God would disconcert the counsels of such designing and dangerous men. And this will appear, if we consider,

1. That the subversion of a good government is one of the greatest calamities that can fall upon a people. A good government is the security of every thing which they hold most dear and valuable in life. It protects their persons, their property, and all their civil and religious privileges. And if this foundation of their public safety and happiness should be taken away, they would be completely ruined. Hence David demands, "If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?" It is the natural tendency of revolutions in government to involve mankind in confusion and misery. This is but too evident from the experience of all nations in all ages

of the world. But we need only turn our eyes to Europe in order to see the dire effects of civil convulsions and revolutions. How many millions have perished and are still perishing by the violent subversions of government in France and the neighboring states. Though Absalom was speedily defeated, yet his attempt to overthrow his father's kingdom filled Jerusalem with consternation and distress. Indeed, there is no temporal calamity which any people have more reason to dread, than the subversion of a good government. Whenever therefore they perceive themselves exposed to this tremendous calamity, whether by secret or open, whether by domestic or foreign enemies, they have abundant reason to call upon God for his gracious and powerful interposition. And though they may not presume to dictate to the Supreme Disposer of all events as to the manner or means of their deliverance, yet they may humbly and fervently pray that he would send confusion into the open and secret counsels of those who are seeking their ruin, and effectually blast all their subtile and malignant designs.

2. It is the prerogative of God to frustrate the most secret and destructive counsels of men. He knows their down-sittings and up-risings. He understands their thoughts afar off. He looks on their hearts and ponders all their purposes. They cannot conceive an evil thought nor concert a malignant design which he cannot perfectly penetrate and comprehend. He is able therefore to discover and disconcert the most subtile and secret counsels against the peace and prosperity of any people. This the inspired writers firmly believed and abundantly taught. Job says, "I would seek unto God, and unto God would I commit my cause, who doeth great things and unsearchable, marvellous things without number. He disappointeth the devices of the crafty, so that their hands cannot perform their enterprise. He taketh the wise in their own craftiness; and the counsels of the froward are carried headlong." And again he says, "He leadeth counsellors away spoiled, and overthroweth the mighty." The Psalmist says, "The Lord bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought; he maketh the devices of the people of none effect." Isaiah represents the church as exulting in the protection of God, and under his protection bidding defiance to all the combinations and counsels of their enemies. "Associate yourselves, O ye people, and ye shall be broken to pieces; and give ear, all ye of far countries, gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken to pieces. Take counsel together, and it shall come to nought; speak the word, and it shall not stand; for God is with us." And Solomon says, "There is no wisdom, nor understanding, nor counsel against

the Lord." God has a supreme control over all the views and designs of men. He can either change or break any of their evil purposes. If they appoint, he can disappoint. If they concert schemes, he can disconcert them. If they take counsel together, he can bring their counsels to nought. Or if they resolve, he can cause them to change their resolutions; for he has their hearts in his hand, and can turn them, as the rivers of water, whithersoever he pleaseth. Hence it highly becomes a people to pray that God would confound the counsels of their enemies, and not suffer any weapon formed against them to prosper. And this will farther appear, if we consider,

3. That God has often defeated the most destructive and deep-laid designs of men, in answer to prayer. David entreated God to confound the designs of Ahithophel. "O Lord, I pray thee, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness." This prayer was graciously heard and answered. Ahithophel advised Absalom to allow him twelve thousand men, and permit him to pursue David immediately, and cut him off while he was "weary and weak-handed." This advice pleased Absalom and all the elders of Israel at first. But Absalom was so infatuated, that he insisted upon consulting Hushai, who was waiting for an opportunity of drawing him into a snare. Accordingly Hushai artfully opposed the advice of Ahithophel, and proposed to delay pursuing David until Absalom could rally all the tribes of Israel from Dan to Beersheba, and in his own person lead them on to a triumphant victory over his father and his party. This foolish, romantic proposal struck Absalom and the men of Israel agreeably, who unitedly said, "The counsel of Hushai the Archite is better than the counsel of Ahithophel." The sage politician had too much pride to brook such treatment, and therefore "when he saw that his counsel was not followed, he saddled his ass, and arose, and gat himself home to his house, and put his household in order, and hanged himself." Thus in answer to David's prayer, "The Lord had appointed to defeat the good counsel of Ahithophel, to the intent that the Lord might bring evil upon Absalom." Sennacherib came against the defenced cities of Judah and took them. And in order to save Jerusalem his capital, Hezekiah made a treaty with the king of Assyria upon the most humiliating terms, and even robbed the temple to fulfil it. But no sooner had he purchased peace, at the expense of three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold, than the perfidious Assyrian, in open violation of his solemn compact, sent his general with a large army to destroy Jerusalem, which he had engaged to spare. And to accomplish this design, his general attempted to detach the affections

of the people from Hezekiah, by addressing them instead of him; and to heighten the insult, sent him a most impious letter. Upon receiving this letter Hezekiah went up to the house of the Lord, and spread it before the Lord, and prayed most devoutly that God would confound the designs of his unrighteous and inhuman enemies. And in answer to his prayer the Lord sent an angel into the camp of the Assyrians, who destroyed an hundred fourscore and five thousand men, which entirely defeated their designs against Jerusalem. Whilst Nehemiah was repairing the walls of Jerusalem after the Babylonish captivity, the enemies of Zion did all they could to frustrate his design. And it was in answer to prayer, that their counsels and combinations were confounded. This is the instructive account: "It came to pass, that when Sanballat and Tobiah, and the Arabians, and the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites, heard that the walls of Jerusalem were made up, and that the breaches began to be stopped; then they were very wroth, and conspired all of them together to come and fight against Jerusalem, and to hinder it. Nevertheless we made our prayer unto our God." Their prayer was heard. "For it came to pass," says Nehemiah, "that when our enemies heard that it was known unto us, and God had brought their counsels to nought, that we returned all of us to the wall, every one to his work." The Bible gives us another remarkable instance of God's confounding a deep-laid plot against his people, in answer to prayer. Haman laid a plan to destroy all the Jews at one stroke. And he succeeded in carrying on his design until he was just ready to accomplish his horrid purpose. But in answer to the fasting and prayers of Mordecai and other pious Jews, God remarkably interposed, and completely destroyed Haman and frustrated all his designs. These and all other instances of the same kind, which are recorded in scripture, clearly warrant and abundantly encourage a people to pray that God would disconcert the counsels of those who are seeking to subvert their government and involve them in national ruin.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. It appears from the political observations which have been made in this discourse, that we enjoy the best kind of civil government. The framers of our federal constitution proceeded upon the best political principle, that of the general good of the people. They took men just where Providence had placed them, and treated them according to those distinctions which the author of nature had made among them.

They found some rich and others poor; some high and others low; some more and others less discerning; some more and others less improved; some formed to govern and others to be governed; and they made it their main object to give these various classes of men their various dues; and to consolidate all their various interests into one common, general, national interest. This appears from the face of the federal constitution, which neither gives any peculiar privilege to one set of men, nor takes away any peculiar privilege from another. We know that it grants no exclusive right to the rich to entail their riches, nor to the honorable to entail their honors. And on the other hand, we know that it deprives no man of his natural right to rise from poverty to wealth; from low to high life; from a private to a public station; and from one public station to another. It leaves all the avenues to honor, wealth and power, entirely open to all classes of men, who have a fair opportunity to rise or sink, according to their mental abilities, their personal conduct, and the public opinion. Such is the natural tendency of our government to promote the general good of the people.

And it must be farther observed, that it is so constructed as not only to promote the general good of the people, but to support itself independently of their immediate interposition. The people have nothing to do in the affairs of government but merely to choose the presidents, the senators, and the representatives, in a regular and constitutional manner. When these rulers are chosen, it is their proper business to check and control each other, so as to support the government which they are authorized to administer. And it appears from their past conduct that they have ably and faithfully performed this part of their duty. There have been vigorous struggles between the various branches of the federal legislature, to encroach upon each other, and to warp our excellent constitution; but these struggles have happily served to strengthen rather than weaken the general government. When the House grasped at power, and endeavored to curtail the prerogatives of the President and of the Senate, those two branches maintained their rights and controlled the aspiring views of the popular demagogues in the House. The speeches made in the federal legislature in defence of our excellent constitution would, in point of learning, eloquence, and patriotism, do honor to the greatest statesmen of ancient Greece or Rome. The support of government cannot be placed in safer hands than those of our rulers. They are invested with proper power, possessed of proper information, and placed in a proper situation to watch and control each other in the administration of government. But the people at

large are deficient in all these respects, to look over the shoulders of their rulers and direct or control them in their public conduct. Hence our federal constitution has happily furnished the three branches of the legislature with those checks and balances which are directly suited to support the general government, without the aid of secret clubs, exclusive patriots, or popular conventions. Whether we view our government in its theory or in its operation, it appears to be the best that ever was framed by the art of man. It is every way calculated to promote the general good of the people, and has in every respect completely answered this most important and desirable end. No nation ever increased faster in numbers, in wealth, in power, in mental improvements, and in all the arts of living, than we have done, under the benign influence of our excellent government.

2. It appears from what has been said, that good government equally tends to restrain men from tyranny and levelism. There is a natural propensity in all mankind to run into one or the other of these political evils. The higher classes of men are more inclined to tyranny, and the lower classes of men are more inclined to levelism. But a government calculated to promote the general good of the people naturally tends to prevent the higher classes of citizens from encroaching upon the lower, and the lower from encroaching upon the higher, by protecting all classes equally in the enjoyment of their natural rights. It must be allowed, that the higher order of the people ought not to deprive the lower order of their ease, liberty, or property; and that the lower order ought not to deprive the higher order of their honor, wealth, or influence. The rich have as good a right as the poor to be protected in the full enjoyment of their natural advantages. This is the dictate of scripture as well as of reason. It was a precept of the law of Moses, "Thou shalt not countenance a poor man in his cause." Poor men often wish to have more than their due; and their poverty often pleads with judges to grant them more than their due. But justice requires the judge to be as tender of the rich man's interest as of that of the poor man. And the Bible enforces this dictate of justice. "Thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honor the person of the mighty." Hence good government, which is founded upon the principles of scripture and reason, is the only possible medium between tyranny and levelism, and equally tends to restrain both. A good government grants no exclusive privileges to the rich and great, and of course restrains them from tyrannizing over the lower classes of the people. And on the other hand, a good government grants no liberty to the lower classes of the peo-

ple, to bring down the rich and great to their own level. And so long as a government effectually guards its subjects from too great equality, and from too great inequality, it promotes and secures that perfect liberty to which all have a just and equal claim. Many seem to imagine that there cannot be perfect liberty without perfect equality; or that liberty and equality are inseparably connected. But this political sentiment is one of the most wild and absurd that ever entered into the mind of man. When Providence has given men unequal abilities, unequal advantages, and unequal possessions, it is a violation of the laws of nature and religion to reduce them all to a level. It is therefore the peculiar excellence of good government to support natural and to suppress unnatural distinctions among men, by giving property a free circulation through the hands of all classes of people. So long as rich men have a right to squander away their property, and poor men have a right to acquire it, it is impossible for wealth to be so unequally enjoyed as to endanger the freedom of the people. That government therefore which allows rich men to become poor, and poor men to become rich, and which treats poor men according to their poverty, and rich men according to their wealth, must necessarily draw a just line between tyranny and levelism, and preserve that political liberty, which directly tends to promote the peace, harmony, and prosperity of every civil community. Hence,

3. A good government is a proper test of men's political principles. All men pretend to like a good government, though they widely differ in their political sentiments. But, notwithstanding all the party names which men bestow upon one another on account of their political opinions, they may all be properly ranked under the three following classes: namely, the friends of tyranny; the friends of anarchy; and the friends of good government. The first class wish for a government which grants exclusive rights and hereditary honors and distinctions. They want to rise above their fellow men by unjust means, and to have it in their power to trample upon the great mass of the people with impunity. The second class wish for a government, (if it may be called a government,) which levels all distinctions, counteracts the laws of nature, and allows them to equal those, whose fortunes, abilities, and characters, are all superior to their own. The third class wish for a government which is founded in justice, and neither increases the advantages of one part of the people, nor diminishes the advantages of another; but protects the rich and the poor, the high and the low, the ruler and the subject, in the full enjoyment of the various blessings which Providence has bestowed upon them.

Now, it is easy to see that men of this last description will be entirely satisfied with a good government, when they actually enjoy it; because it actually answers all the purposes which they desire a government to answer. If, therefore, the government of these United States be a good government, as we have shown, then all who understandingly approve of it, and are satisfied with it, are friends to good government; but on the other hand, all who dislike and oppose it are either the friends of tyranny, or the friends of anarchy. It is impossible for those who wish to be tyrants to like our government, because it is directly calculated to restrain tyranny; and it is equally impossible for those who wish for anarchy or levelism to like our government, because it equally tends to restrain disorganizers and levellers. All the objections which have ever been made against the first principles of the federal government, have been founded upon either the principles of tyranny or the principles of levelism. Hence we have reason to expect, that all who persevere in opposing the federal government, will finally appear to be either tyrants or levellers, in principle. Men of good political principles may be led astray by artful and designing demagogues, to dislike our government for a while; but when the principles of it are clearly displayed, and the conduct of the rulers founded upon those principles is fully developed, they will cordially unite with its present friends, in admiring and supporting it. It is probable, the time is not far distant when party names must all subside, and all the people of America be divided into friends or enemies of good government, according as their political principles agree or disagree with the standard of our excellent constitution.

4. We learn from what has been said, that our government is equally balanced between tyranny and anarchy. Every good government is a medium between these two extremes. For it is calculated to promote the general good, and to support itself independently of the people. These two properties of a government properly balance it, and keep it from leaning towards tyranny on the one hand, and anarchy on the other. But since no civil constitution framed by man is exactly balanced between a too rigid and a too lax government, there is reason to apprehend, that every civil constitution does naturally incline more towards one, than the other of these extremes. When the federal constitution was first established, we had nothing to guide our conjectures concerning its ultimate tendency but theory, which often misleads the greatest connoisseurs in politics. Both before and since it began to operate, many have been divided in their opinions respecting it. Some hoped and expected, that it would gradually grow stronger and stron-

ger, and incline more and more towards monarchy; whilst others hoped and expected, that it would grow weaker and weaker, and gradually sink down into mere democracy or levelism. Both those parties had some ground for their different hopes and expectations. The federal constitution does give rulers larger powers and larger salaries, than the former state constitutions did, and thereby enables those in the administration of government to enforce their laws with greater energy and effect. This seems to favor monarchy. For the more power men have, the more they commonly want, and endeavor to obtain. But it is to be considered, that the federal constitution has made all the rulers elective, in a regular and rapid rotation, which gives the people sufficient power to check their ambitious and tyrannical views. Besides, the constitution has prohibited both rulers and subjects from amassing exorbitant wealth, which has the greatest tendency to warp a civil constitution. Neither a ruler, nor a subject, can do much towards introducing arbitrary power, without having wealth sufficient to create dependents. But it is extremely difficult for either a ruler, or a subject, under our government, to make dependents, by public or private property. The ruler is highly responsible for his disposal of public property, and therefore is under no great temptation to employ it in making dependents. And the subject is not allowed to entail his inheritance upon his heirs from generation to generation; which must prevent any person or family from amassing that exorbitant wealth, which is prejudicial to civil liberty. Hence our constitution seems to be sufficiently guarded against monarchy. But it must be allowed, that it is not too well guarded against democracy or levelism. The people have a right to choose all their own rulers very frequently, and to choose their representatives every other year. These are the most numerous branch of government, and the most apt to imbibe the sentiments of the people, who are always fond of lessening the powers and prerogatives of their rulers. The representatives, therefore, will naturally incline to favor popular prejudices, and to encroach upon the other branches of the legislature. This natural conjecture is already confirmed by the operation, as well as theory of our government. The House have actually shown, in the course of their public debates, a strong inclination to lessen the legal prerogatives of the President and Senate. Nor is this all. The constitution implicitly allows the people to hold meetings or conventions, for the very purpose of inspecting and influencing the administration of government. This liberty of the people has already become alarming, and loudly proclaims that the federal constitution leans more towards democracy than mon-

archy. Is there one intelligent man in America, who seriously believes, that it is easier to turn our government into a monarchy than into a democracy? Actions speak louder than words. And the actions of our enemies declare, that they really believe it is much easier to introduce democracy than monarchy into these United States. We may all now know, which is the weakest side of our government; and which we ought to take the most care to guard against its enemies.

5. If the subverters of government have been justly described, then we have reason to conclude that we are now exposed to the arts and intrigues of such dangerous men. It is certain, that some among ourselves have employed their tongues and their pens to alienate the affections of the people from the government. But whether we are more in danger from men of our own, than from men of a foreign nation, may admit of a doubt. We know that the French republic has long been hostile to our civil constitution, which has been such a happy source of our national peace and prosperity. Their politicians have condemned its first principles, and represented it as calculated to destroy all civil liberty, and to introduce absolute despotism. Their ambassadors, consuls, and other emissaries, have industriously endeavored to sow the seeds of sedition among the people, and to alienate their affections from their able and faithful rulers. They have either written, or caused to be written and circulated through licentious presses, the most false and inflammatory pieces, to reproach those in administration, and render them universally odious and contemptible. They have originated self-created secret societies, in order to embarrass and stop the wheels of government. They have treated our envoys-extraordinary with intolerable neglect, and exhausted all their art and intrigue to betray them into measures at once destructive of our national honor, interest, and independence. And after they have done all this, they not only boast of detaching our affections from our government, but threaten us with the weight of their vengeance if we presume to support it. Surely these facts are sufficient to convince every candid, impartial man in America, that the French nation and all who approve of their measures are really aiming to subvert our government, and involve us in national ruin. It is time, therefore, for all classes of people to open their eyes, and attend to the present alarming situation of public affairs.

6. This discourse naturally suggests various measures which are proper to be used in support of our excellent constitution against the arts and intrigues of foreign and domestic enemies. Since these artful and designing men pretend that our govern-

ment is bad, it is certainly proper in the first place to examine it for ourselves. The federal constitution will bear examination. It was framed by men of great abilities and political knowledge. It was, at first, submitted to the free and full discussion of the people. It is now in their hands, and they may examine it as deliberately and critically as they please. The best means of information upon the subject are within their reach. They may consult either men, or books, or both. But until they have properly informed themselves, it is extremely absurd to hearken to any complaints, which are so freely thrown out against the national government, by its foreign and domestic enemies. If people in general would only examine the first principles and constituent parts of the federal government with care and candor, we presume they would be fully convinced that no material or essential alteration could be made in it, without destroying its natural tendency to promote our national freedom and happiness. Could we, as a people, only be understandingly and heartily united in our attachment to our own government, it would strike a fatal stroke to the hopes and exertions of foreign and domestic disorganizers. Let us, therefore, use every proper method to receive and diffuse just ideas of government, and, if possible, effect a general harmony in political sentiments. If the friends of our constitution would labor as much to unite the people; as some do to disunite them, we might expect to see, very soon, one political opinion running through all the United States, and bidding defiance to those who wish to divide and destroy them.

It is farther necessary, in order to support our government, to place a proper confidence in those who administer it. They are the men in whom the majority of the nation is united, and in whom the wisdom of the nation is concentred. All our national wisdom is collected in our national council. The wisdom of individuals cannot operate to any advantage, only as it is conveyed to the head of the body politic. To the head of our nation we ought to look up, with confidence, for wisdom and direction. If our supreme rulers have not wisdom enough to manage the national concerns, the nation must perish for lack of knowledge. As individuals, we have no wisdom nor power to govern or defend ourselves. This our enemies know, and therefore they use so much art and sophistry to divide our councils, and lead us to withdraw our confidence from those, who alone can devise and carry into effect the means of our safety and happiness. It is of peculiar importance, at this day, to turn a deaf ear to the false and flattering language of the Absaloms, who are endeavoring to

steal away our affections; and to place a just confidence in the wisdom and integrity of those whom we have freely chosen to govern us. We have men of tried wisdom and integrity at the helm of government, in whom we have abundant reason to confide. There is not perhaps a man in the world who is superior to the President of these United States, in political wisdom, integrity and experience. If we cannot confide in him in the discharge of constitutional duties, in whom can we confide? And if we presume to act in concert with his secret and avowed enemies, what can we expect, but to fall into their power, and to experience their tender mercy, which has proved to be the extreme of cruelty, to millions of their deluded votaries?

But since all second causes are under the control of the supreme First Cause, it is our indispensable duty to place our supreme and ultimate dependence upon him. For after all our endeavors to disconcert the counsels of our enemies, it is in the power of the Supreme Disposer of all events to succeed or blast our united efforts. We ought therefore most sincerely and perseveringly to implore the blessing of God upon all our public and private exertions, to preserve our national freedom and happiness. He can either dispose our enemies to change their ambitious, sanguinary counsels, or turn them into foolishness.

There are weighty considerations which urge us to pursue these measures with vigor and perseverance. Let us consider that if we once lose our present constitution by the secret arts or open violence of our enemies, they will never suffer us to choose another. I know they promise to give us a better; and, like Absalom, flatter us with the phantom of liberty and equality. But let us beware of their arts, which have proved so fatal to others. How have they treated those nations, whom they have decoyed and conquered? Have they given them liberty and equality? No; they have given them nothing but equality in poverty, misery, and slavery. The French are ignorant of good government. They never enjoyed this invaluable blessing. They have experienced only tyranny, democracy, and anarchy. They are, notwithstanding their boasted refinement, mere novices in politics. They could not, if they would, give themselves, or any other nation, a free and efficient government. It is the height of folly in Americans, who have always enjoyed the largest portion of civil liberty, to rely upon any European nation, and especially upon the French, to teach them how to govern themselves. They have yet to learn of us, that "liberty with order," is the perfection of civil policy.

In this connection let us also reflect upon the peace and

prosperity which we have enjoyed under our present form and administration of government. Our national happiness has exceeded our most sanguine hopes and expectations. This all parties have been constrained to acknowledge. And while the friends of government have employed this as an argument in its favor, its enemies have been reduced to the wretched necessity of employing it as an objection against it. They tell us we are too prosperous. We are growing rich and great too fast. We are in danger of being ruined by our prosperity. This is undoubtedly true. But who can imagine that this is an argument against the excellency of our government? It was designed to raise our national prosperity as high as possible. And since it confessedly answers this noble and important purpose, we are under peculiar obligations to support it, and if possible, transmit it to the latest posterity. We shall be guilty of the basest ingratitude to God, and to those whom he raised up to give us our admirable constitution, if we entertain a thought of bartering it away for the Utopian scheme of liberty and equality. This is not a harmless but a fatal delusion. The bare experiment of it has cost the liberty and lives of millions. If we have the least spark of national wisdom or gratitude, we shall unite our efforts to preserve the grand palladium of our national happiness. And if we only do this, we have great reason to hope for success.

For we ought to consider, in the last place, that this is Emmanuel's land, in which he has planted his church, and maintained his cause by a series of signal interpositions. If we act up to our profession and obligation as a religious people, we may humbly hope that the God whom we worship will defeat the impious and cruel designs of our infidel enemies, who have denied his existence and providence, and trampled upon his word and all his sacred institutions. It is a token for good, that our first magistrate has called upon us, this day, to humble ourselves before God, and unitedly implore his mercy. If we rend our hearts and not our garments; if we sincerely repent and reform; we may safely confide in God for pardon and deliverance, according to the established rule of his conduct towards a penitent and reformed people. "At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up and to pull down and to destroy it: If that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them." Amen.

SERMON VIII.

DANIEL.

GENERAL ELECTION, MAY 30, 1798.

So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius, and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian. — DANIEL, vi. 28.

THE prosperity of this noble ruler clearly appears from the whole history of his life. Though in his youth he was carried away captive from Judea to Babylon, yet that dark and distressing scene soon opened the way to a brighter prospect. His high descent, his graceful appearance, and his shining talents, secured the royal favor, and the peculiar privilege of a public education. Having finished his academical course, he was presented in usual form before the reigning monarch; who, strictly inquiring into his proficiency in learning, found him not only superior to all his companions, but ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers in all his realm. Pleased with this promising youth, he took him into his own presence, and employed him in his own service. This was only a short and easy step to higher preferment. Being called to tell and to interpret the king's dream, which no other man was able to do, he was immediately advanced above all the governors in the province of Babylon. Though he had now scarcely reached the years of manhood, yet he faithfully and honorably discharged the duties of his office, during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, during the reign of Evil-Merodach, and until the close of the reign of Belshazzar. At that portentous period he was sent for, to read and to explain the hand-writing on the wall, which contained the awful doom of that vile and impious prince; for which he was raised to higher dignity, and

made the third ruler in the kingdom. The following night Babylon was taken, Belshazzar was slain, and all his dominions thrown into the hands of Darius the Mede, by the victorious arms of Cyrus the Persian. Upon this large accession to his empire, Darius found it necessary to make a new arrangement in the departments of state. And in this new arrangement he took particular notice of the celebrated Daniel, and placed him at the head of a hundred and twenty princes. Here, in spite of all his enemies, he continued to prosper, until Cyrus took the full possession of the Persian monarchy. That auspicious event gave him a free and easy access to Cyrus, and a happy opportunity of gaining a just and honorable influence over that great and amiable prince. In a word, it was the peculiar lot of Daniel to enjoy the favor and confidence of four of the greatest monarchs of the East; and to sustain, with dignity and success, some of the highest offices of state, for more than sixty years, in a constant, uninterrupted succession. Such another instance of long and increasing prosperity in public life, we presume to say, cannot be found in the whole history of man.

Successful men have always been revered as well as admired. The Greeks and Romans held those in high estimation who appeared to enjoy the peculiar smiles of the invisible powers. The same sentiment universally prevails in the minds of men. They spontaneously conclude that those possess some extraordinary excellence, who are uncommonly successful in any important station of life. And if the Supreme Being governs the natural and moral world according to a previous connection between causes and effects, there seems to be a just foundation to suppose that peculiar prosperity is a mark of peculiar merit. Under the impression of this sentiment, it is very natural to inquire what extraordinary qualities Daniel possessed, which mutually conspired to promote his prosperity in the management of public affairs. Here it may be proper to observe,

First: That this excellent and prosperous ruler possessed superior powers of mind. The Father of Spirits has been pleased to display the same sovereignty in the bestowment of intellectual faculties, as in the bestowment of inferior favors. To some he has given ten talents; to some five; and to some fewer. The minds of different men are differently constructed. In one man the memory is the superior power; in another, the imagination is the most brilliant talent; in a third, a clear and penetrating judgment is the most prominent faculty; but in Daniel, all these natural powers were equally strong and well-proportioned. His quick apprehension and retentive memory

were happily united with a strong and penetrating judgment, which formed him a great and noble genius. This appears from the account which we have of his mental improvements. He acquired knowledge with the greatest ease and rapidity, which discovered a sprightly and retentive mind. And he was able to excel in every branch of science to which he turned his attention, which equally displayed the strength and symmetry of all his intellectual powers. These, perhaps, some may choose to ascribe to the plastic power of education; but taking education in the most extensive latitude in which Helvetius or any other author uses the term, it will not account for every mental distinction. It is readily admitted, that all the objects with which a man is surrounded, and all the connections and circumstances in which he is placed, will either strengthen or weaken his original powers. But to ascribe these powers to any thing exterior to the mind itself, is no less absurd than to ascribe the attractive power of the magnet to the needle, which only serves to discover that peculiar property. Daniel, like every other man in the morning of life, was unacquainted with the native strength of his own mind; but by repeated mental exertions in the course of his education, he discovered those superior talents which qualified him to manage the affairs of government, with great reputation and success. A party spirit, or the favor of friends, or a peculiar concurrence of circumstances, may chance to raise a man to a public station; but if his natural abilities are unequal to his office, he will most certainly fall to rise no more. But Daniel began to rise by the dint of merit, and therefore he continued to rise from office to office, until he reached the next step to imperial power. Like Julius Cæsar, he was born to govern, whether he lived in Judea, in Babylon, in Persia, or in any other quarter of the globe.

Secondly. Daniel possessed a large share of general information, which contributed to form him a great and successful politician. Civil government is extremely complicated and extensive, both in theory and practice. It embraces all the objects in this world, and all the interests and concerns of men in this life. No species of human knowledge is foreign to the business of a statesman, who needs to be universally acquainted with men and things. This idea was early and deeply impressed on the mind of Daniel. He was born a prince, and received a princely education. Providence directed his first and supreme view to the affairs of state. To be an able and successful politician was the single object which engrossed his whole attention, and which guided all his exertions. And no person, perhaps, ever enjoyed more ample means and opportu-

nities of attaining this object. His great capacity, his refined taste, his studious habit, his early acquaintance with the solid branches of learning, and more especially his peculiar situation, prepared him to acquire the largest stock of general knowledge.

Babylon stood on the plains of Shinar, which was the most venerable and most enlightened spot on the face of the earth. There the residue of men first settled after the Flood; and there they continued and increased, until their absurd and impious attempt to build the tower of Babel, proved the occasion of a general dispersion. Though this gave a universal shock to human affairs, and naturally checked the progress of knowledge; yet the seeds of science were happily preserved by the children of Ham, who still remained on the plains of Babylon. That city, therefore, was the fountain-head of information. There all the knowledge of both the old and the new world concentred. There the arts and sciences were first cultivated. And there a literary society was first formed. The Chaldeans, who composed that society, devoted themselves wholly to the improvements of the mind, and made it their whole business to acquire and disseminate every species of rare and useful knowledge. And for this purpose, we may presume they not only made deep researches into the works of nature, but also collected from every quarter the most ancient and most valuable discoveries on every important subject. In such a circle of learned men, and in possession of so many means of information, such a man as Daniel, who had a peculiar capacity and taste for learning, must have amassed as large a stock of human literature, as could be derived from all the labors and researches of antiquity.

But I must farther observe, that Daniel had the best sources of information in his own hands; I mean the sacred books of divine inspiration. These acquainted him with the creation and fall of man, and the universal corruption of human nature. These exhibited the church of God as the great object to which all human governments ought to be subservient. These placed before him a form of government which was absolutely perfect. These presented him with the lives and characters of the greatest and best statesmen, for his constant imitation and encouragement. These reminded him of the awful fate of wicked nations, and of wicked rulers. And these inculcated upon his own conscience his solemn obligations to live and act like a dying and accountable creature. By reading and devoutly studying these sacred volumes, he obtained the best political as well as religious knowledge. Such a variety of books, however, would have been more injurious than bene-

ficial to him, had he read without reflection, or thought without decision. But his strong, capacious, discerning mind, could not be overloaded with learning. Like Pericles, he was able "to turn and wind every thing to his own purpose," and to apply every species of knowledge to a political use. The state physician needs an immense fund of political information, in order to prescribe on all occasions a proper remedy for every political disorder. Such a source of political information Daniel possessed. He carried in his mind the history of the world, and the experience of ages. This enabled him to act with propriety in every situation, and always to succeed in all his public measures. But,

Thirdly. Daniel's extraordinary wisdom was no less beneficial than his great information. Nebuchadnezzar pronounced him, even in his youth, to be ten times better "in all matters of wisdom," than all the wise men in Babylon. And before he was thirty, his eminent wisdom was universally known and celebrated, not only through the empire, but through all the neighboring nations.

The haughty king of Tyrus had heard of the fame of his wisdom, otherwise he could not have felt the force of that severe reproof of the inspired prophet: "Thou art wiser than Daniel."

Wisdom is a term of various and extensive meaning. It includes not only invention, but foresight and sagacity. Wisdom certainly implies the power of invention. It enables a man to take a clear and comprehensive view of things; and, under that view, to form the noblest designs, and to adopt the best means to accomplish the best purposes. But after a man has devised a great and complicated scheme, and made choice of the proper measures to carry it into execution, there is still occasion for what is commonly called foresight. This is that part of wisdom, which looks forward to, and provides against, unforeseen contingences, which may possibly defeat a great and good design. But foresight is founded in sagacity, which is the power of discerning the near and remote connection of things; of discovering the peculiar dispositions of mankind; and of penetrating their most dark and deep designs.

A large measure of wisdom, in all its branches, is indispensably necessary to form a great and good politician. Civil rulers are obliged, by the nature of their office, to be intimately concerned with every description of men. And unless they are "as wise as serpents and as harmless as doves," they are in the utmost danger of being betrayed into measures which will be injurious to themselves as well as to the public. Rehoboam lost the greatest part of his kingdom, by hearkening to the evil

advice of young and conceited counsellors. Political storms and tempests often rise, in which the ablest statesmen find occasion to exert all their wisdom, to devise the best measures to prevent the political ship from foundering. Daniel frequently employed his wisdom to great advantage. By his wise and prudent conduct, he secured the favor and assistance of Cyrus in restoring the Jews to their native land. By his great sagacity, he obtained the liberty of living according to the laws of his own religion. When he preferred his request to the superintendent of the captives, he replied that he could not grant it without endangering his head to the king. But Daniel was so perfectly acquainted with every avenue to the human heart, that he brought his benefactor to a cheerful compliance, even at the risk of his life. So, when the king had signed a rash and cruel decree to destroy all the wise men of Babylon, he had the "wisdom and counsel" to stop the executioner in the discharge of his office, to appease the wrath of the king, and to preserve the lives of many of his most valuable subjects. By virtue of such extraordinary wisdom, he was able to promote his own and the public good; and to succeed in the administration of the most despotic government that ever existed.

Fourthly. Daniel was a man of invincible firmness. This was but the natural effect of his wisdom. He was able to think for himself, to form his own opinions, and to comprehend the nature and tendency of his own designs. Having, therefore, once deliberately and wisely concerted a measure, he expected to succeed, and eventually to gain the approbation of the public. This well-founded confidence inspired him with irresistible vigor and fortitude, in the prosecution of all his public measures. If he met with difficulty or opposition he steadily pursued his object, and appealed to the end to justify the propriety of the means. He entreated Melzar to try his proposed expedient, and promised to renounce it, if it did not eventually answer a wise and valuable purpose. So he besought the king to suspend the execution of his hasty decree, only upon the condition that his dream should be interpreted, and his wishes completely gratified. Being ever fully persuaded of the wisdom and rectitude of his public conduct, he was always willing to suffer the opposition and clamor of the multitude, until his wisdom and rectitude should have a fair opportunity to triumph over all their prejudice and folly. Such a firmness of mind is the reverse of a vain and foolish obstinacy, which consists in a wilful opposition to the dictates of wisdom. This was the fault of Pharaoh, who ruined himself and his kingdom by rejecting the advice of Moses. This was the

fault of Saul, who disobeyed the voice of Samuel, and forfeited his title to the throne of Israel. And this was the fault of Ahab, who despised the admonition of the prophet, and died as a fool dieth, at Ramoth-Gilead. But Moses, Joshua and Caleb, displayed a wise and noble firmness, in conducting the children of Israel to the land of promise, notwithstanding all their unreasonable opposition and complaints. If we consult the history of rulers, we shall find firmness of mind to be one of the distinguishing features of every great and prosperous statesman. And how often did God enjoin it upon the rulers of Israel, "to be strong and of a good courage," in the discharge of their difficult and dangerous duties! There is no one thing, perhaps, more conducive to success in any important and difficult undertaking, than a firm, steady, unremitting spirit. And we have abundant reason to conclude, that this noble spirit had a large share of influence in promoting the success and prosperity of Daniel, in some of the most critical and hazardous situations of his public life.

Fifthly. This same Daniel, who prospered so much under the most arbitrary princes, was a perfect pattern of inviolable integrity. By this is meant, that he always aimed to do justice, and to treat every man according to the eternal rule of right. As a ruler, he acted upon principle, in guarding the lives, the properties, and the characters of his subjects. Of this we have incontestable evidence, even the united testimony of his most malicious enemies. "Then the presidents and princes sought to find occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find none occasion nor fault, forasmuch as he was faithful." It is very remarkable, that the most critical and malignant eyes could discover no blemish in the integrity of Daniel, through the whole course of his public conduct. But we are to remember that he had derived his moral sentiments from the pure source of divine inspiration. He had read with serious attention, the solemn charge which Moses delivered to the judges of Israel. "Hear the causes between every man and his brother, and the stranger that is with him. Ye shall not respect persons in judgment, but ye shall hear the small as well as the great: ye shall not be afraid of the face of man; the judgment is God's." He had felt the force of that divine admonition to every civil officer in every civil department: "That which is altogether just shalt thou follow." But perhaps no text in the Bible had a more steady, powerful, and practical influence upon his mind, than the last words which God put into the mouth of a dying statesman. "The God of Israel said, the rock of Israel spoke to me, He that ruleth over men must be just."

The promotion of justice is the ultimate object of every branch of civil government. This is clearly and forcibly expressed by an eminent British writer. "We are," says he, "to look upon all the vast apparatus of our government as having ultimately no other object or purpose but the distribution of justice, or in other words, the support of the twelve judges. Kings and parliaments, fleets and armies, officers of the court and revenue, ambassadors, ministers, and privy-counsellors, are all subordinate in their end to this part of administration." If the support of justice be the ultimate design of all civil governments, then the exercise of justice must be the indispensable duty of all civil rulers. They are appointed, not so much to promote, as to defend the public interest. Though they have the power of enacting laws, yet they have no right to dissolve the solemn obligation of mutual contracts, nor to require any man to do a single act repugnant to that immutable justice which is founded in the nature of things. And though they do, in a sense, hold the purse-strings of the people, yet they have no right to dispose of the public property for any other purpose than the promotion of public justice. If they grant donations to particular corporations, or to particular persons, they ought to do it, not for the sake of those particular corporations or particular persons, but simply to promote the public good. Indeed, their whole public conduct ought to be regulated by the infallible standard of immutable justice. It is required of all stewards, whether sacred or civil, that a man be found faithful. Fidelity in civil rulers is, of all other virtues, the most acceptable to the people, who universally feel its happy influence in every condition of life. Hence mankind have always manifested an uncommon attachment to and veneration for those eminent rulers who have given uniform and unequivocal proofs of their moral rectitude. Aristides among the Greeks, Cato among the Romans, and Daniel among the Jews, will be forever celebrated for their incorruptible integrity. This is that sterling excellence in a statesman, which needs no inscription nor crowned head to give it a universal currency among all nations of the earth. It was this rare, shining, captivating virtue of integrity, that recommended Daniel to Jews and Babylonians, to Medes and Persians, to Darius and Cyrus, and to every other prince who employed him in public affairs. But,

Finally. The prosperity of Daniel amidst all the burdens and dangers of public life, must be principally ascribed to his eminent piety and devotion. Like other men, who stood upon the pinnacle of power, he was continually exposed to the severest strokes of adversity. He came into administration in troublous

times, and had a clear prophetic view of the dreadful convulsions which were just ready to seize an expiring empire; and whilst he sat in the king's gate, he was a spectator of many of those awful scenes which were a fulfilment of his own predictions. He saw the haughty king of Babylon shaken from his throne, driven from men, and degraded below the beasts that perish. He attended monarch after monarch to the silent mansions of the dead, and felt those heavy shocks which falling princes never fail to give. And he was personally involved in the horrors of that memorable night, which sunk a mighty empire in perpetual ruin. But none of these things moved him, because his heart was fixed, trusting in the Lord. Those national convulsions and revolutions which proved so fatal to others, all conspired to promote his personal prosperity and success. He secured the favor and protection of Heaven by his sincere and exemplary piety. He carried conviction to all around him, that he possessed a truly "divine and excellent spirit." His religion was neither a glowing enthusiasm, nor a gloomy superstition; but a pure and steady principle of universal benevolence. He gave God the supreme affection of his heart; and was neither afraid nor ashamed to profess the true religion, in the midst of a country and a court that were involved in the grossest idolatry. He extended his benevolent regards to all the children of men, whether Jews or Gentiles. He zealously promoted the cause of religion, and spent days and weeks in humble, fervent, effectual prayers for the prosperity of Zion. He walked within his house with a perfect heart, and every day called upon God at the head of his family. This he did, not because it was a common and reputable practice, but because it was a plain and important duty, which he owed to God, and to those whom God had committed to his care and instruction. His family devotion was known to his enemies as well as to his friends; and because there was nothing else to take hold of, his enemies took hold of this, as the only possible engine to work his ruin. Accordingly, they conspired together and obtained a royal decree, that "if any person should ask a petition of any God or man for thirty days, except of the king, he should be cast into the den of lions." As soon as he knew the writing was signed, he went to his house, opened his windows, fell upon his knees, and three times a day prayed and gave thanks to God. This threw him into the hands of his enemies and out of the protection of his prince, who was constrained to expose him to the furious beasts of prey. But his heroic faith and fervent prayers stopped the mouths of lions, defeated the designs of his enemies, and smoothed the path of declining life with signal prosperity.

For it is in immediate reference to this astonishing event, that it is emphatically said in the words of our text: "So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius, and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian."

I have now delineated the most prominent features of this great and amiable statesman. His life is a bright assemblage of all the human virtues. And it is a just and beautiful remark, that "the collected virtues of one man strike the mind much more forcibly and advantageously, than the scattered virtues of many." Permit me then to hold up the character of Daniel as a mirror, in which all persons, and especially those in places of power and trust, may clearly and sensibly discover both what they are and what they ought to be.

The first thing suggested by this excellent character is, that great and good rulers are worthy of the highest respect. Who can contemplate the pious, virtuous, and useful life of Daniel, without paying him the sincere homage of the heart? Whilst he was acting his noble part on the stage of life, the happy influence of his public and private virtues commanded universal admiration and esteem. The greatest men in his day honored him beyond the bounds of duty, or even propriety. Nebuchadnezzar prostrated himself at his feet, and paid him the excess of eastern complaisance. Darius gave him the strongest marks of sincere and ardent affection. Nor was he less esteemed in the court of Heaven. The supreme Ruler despatched an envoy-extraordinary to assure him, "he was greatly beloved" by his Maker, and by all the principalities and powers above. This was no unmeaning compliment, but a divine testimony to his just desert of universal love and respect. All civil rulers of the same character are equally objects of the highest veneration and regard. They are ministers of God for good to the people, and the principal instruments of all their temporal prosperity. Though the inventors of arts and sciences, and the promoters of agriculture and commerce, deserve the public esteem; yet wise and faithful rulers have a better claim to universal gratitude and respect. For it is ultimately owing to their exertions, that mankind derive any real benefit from their labors, their studies, or any of their natural advantages. A people may flourish in all the arts of Italy, or abound in all the wealth of the Indies, and yet drag out a poor, miserable life, under the power and oppression of a cruel and rapacious tyrant. But just men, ruling in the fear of God, give a people the full enjoyment of all the blessings of Providence. Those rulers, therefore, who direct all their views to the public good, and exert all their power and influence to promote it, are great benefactors to the world, and deserve to

be universally respected and revered. For this cause, therefore, God expressly commands every soul to be subject to the higher powers, not only for wrath, but also for conscience' sake; rendering to all in authority their dues; tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor.

The pious and devout life of Daniel, in the next place, loudly admonishes civil rulers how much they are capable of doing, to promote the religious as well as civil interests of the people. The children of Israel were extremely addicted to the worship of idols, from the time they made the golden calf, to the time of their captivity in Babylon. But in that land of idols, the parent of idolatry, they were effectually and finally cured of their national sin. This great and extraordinary reformation, we must conclude, was brought about by the instrumentality of Daniel. The captive tribes were struck with his pious and exemplary conduct, in the midst of the worshippers of idols. They saw him pay a strict and sacred regard to those divine rites and ceremonies, which were designed to separate them from all the idolatrous nations. They saw him daily and devoutly worship the true God in his own family. They saw his faith and piety stop the lions' mouths. They heard, with deep conviction, proclamation after proclamation, published by the great monarchs of Babylon, giving honor to the God of Daniel, and pouring contempt upon every false and inferior deity. They were acquainted with his days of mourning, fasting, and prayer, for the revival of religion, and the prosperity of the church. In a word, they saw the purest piety constantly displayed in the life of a man, who was seated in the king's gate, and universally loved and revered. And is it a thing incredible, that the pious example and influence of such a great and renowned ruler should awe the minds of a whole nation, and constrain them to cast all their idols to the moles and to the bats for ever? The living example of other religious rulers has had the same transforming influence upon the minds of their subjects. We read, "The people served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua."

Among the pious kings of Judah, do we find one, who ever failed to bring about a visible reformation in piety and virtue? And is it not equally true, that pious rulers, by their personal example and influence, have actually formed the moral and religious character of the people in this land? We know, that so long as all the governors, senators, and representatives of this Commonwealth, were public professors and zealous promoters of religion, the Sabbaths were sanctified; the houses of

God were filled; divine institutions were attended; family religion and parental authority were maintained; cards, and balls, and theatres were unknown, and all open vice and infidelity were treated with general and just contempt. Whether this was pure superstition, or pure religion, it was certainly owing, in a great measure, to the example of civil rulers, who meant to form the people to virtue and piety. It is to be expected, that rulers should form the character of the people, and not that the people should form the character of rulers. It was never known, that the house of Israel reformed one of their loose, irreligious kings; but it was often known, that one pious, exemplary king reformed the whole nation. If Daniel had fallen into the corruptions of Babylon, there is not the least probability that his people could have prevented his ruin. But when they had forsaken the paths of virtue and piety, he was able, by his personal example and influence, to bring them back to the worship and service of the God of their fathers. Civil rulers would find no occasion of promoting religion by their laws, if they would only heartily and unitedly promote it by their lives. Let them only live religion, and they will do enough to discharge their duty; and I will venture to add, they will do enough to form this people to a virtuous and religious character. For if this effect should not flow from the example of their virtue and piety, it would be a singular instance, and such an one as cannot be found in the history of any nation, from the beginning of the world to this day. If civil rulers carry the power of reformation in their own hands, then their obligation to reform the people must be equal to that power. Let me, therefore, entreat the man of office, the man of honor, the man of influence, seriously to consider, that "to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin."

It farther appears from the character and conduct of Daniel, that those who sit in the highest seats of government, have no excuse to neglect the profession and practice of vital piety. Real religion is necessary on their own account, as well as on account of those who live under the influence of their powerful example. It is hard to say, whether the most dignified characters deserve our veneration, more than our tender compassion. They are certainly surrounded with peculiar temptations to forget their Creator, and to neglect the one thing needful. But Daniel has told them by his example, that they are under a great delusion, if they once imagine their high stations and public employments will afford them the least excuse for neglecting the duties of piety and devotion. They cannot seriously believe, that they have greater temptations to resist

than Daniel resisted; nor greater difficulties and embarrassments to surmount than Daniel surmounted. He was born a prince, and spent his whole life in the presence of princes. But whilst he lived with the princes of Judah; whilst he marched with the army of the Chaldeans; and whilst he resided with the gay and dissolute youth in Babylon; he remembered and obeyed his Creator. When his office seated him in the king's gate, surrounded by profligate and infidel courtiers, he supported and adorned his religious profession. When a hundred and twenty princes sat at his feet, and the affairs of a hundred and twenty provinces lay upon his hands, he found time and opportunity for the performance of every religious duty. And when propriety required him to submit to the most public and pompous parade; to be clothed in the silks of Persia, and adorned with the gold of Ophir, and to receive the incense of public honors; he could silently retire in the close of the day, and humbly prostrate himself, as a poor guilty worm, before the supreme Majesty of heaven and earth, and devoutly implore his mercy. He very well knew, that though ornaments and honors might dazzle the eyes of unthinking multitudes, and conceal his imperfections from the view of men; yet they could by no means hide his heart, or conceal his criminal defects from the omniscient eye of God, to whom he stood accountable for all his internal feelings and external conduct. If young politicians, if aged statesmen, if the most dignified characters on earth, would seriously survey the pious and devout life of Daniel, they would be fully convinced, that neither the cares, nor honors, nor temptations of public life, can dissolve their obligations to call upon God; to read his word; to reverence his sanctuary; and to attend all his holy and sacred institutions. Dignity and devotion have been and may be united. Rulers over men have been and may be the most humble and faithful servants of God. "Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling." Moreover,

The faith and piety of Daniel reprove the ignorance and presumption of those politicians who profess and propagate the principles of infidelity. The infidels in our Saviour's day were men of superior rank and figure. And it is well known, that infidelity has commonly been first imbibed and propagated by professed philosophers and politicians. Men of this exalted character have lately spread atheism and infidelity through a great nation; and attempted to diffuse the poison of their irreligious and disorganizing sentiments among the people of America. Such champions of infidelity endeavor to shake our faith in natural and revealed religion, by carrying us

back into the dark regions of antiquity. Hume, Voltaire, and Condorcet, represent mankind as being originally involved in ignorance and barbarism. And they pretend to trace the progress of the human mind, in emerging from that primitive savage state, and gradually rising to a nobler state of civilization, learning, and infidelity. But were they better acquainted with the dark regions of antiquity, and with the rise and progress of human improvements, than the pious and learned Daniel? Did they ever live with him on the plains of Shinar? Did they ever search the same records and traditions of antiquity, which he searched? Did they ever converse with the Chaldeans, with whom he conversed? Were they ever personally acquainted, as he was, with the learned Amonians, who, as an incomparable writer* has clearly proved, spread every species of civil, political, and religious knowledge, through Egypt, through Greece, and through every part of the inhabited world? The most learned infidels of the present age, who have ransacked the bowels of the earth and the dark corners of the globe, to pick up arguments against revealed religion, are but minute philosophers in comparison with Daniel. Whilst he stood on the plains of Babylon, with the Bible in one hand, and all antiquity in the other, he saw, as clearly as the sun at noon-day, the truth and divinity of that holy religion, which came down from heaven through the medium of divine inspiration. All his knowledge of the natural, moral, and political world, instead of weakening, confirmed his faith in the scriptures of truth. His strong and cordial belief of divine revelation, therefore, completely demonstrates what has often been justly asserted, that infidelity is not seated in the head, but in the heart; and flows not from profound knowledge, but from a meaner and more criminal cause. Is it not sufficient to strike any modern infidel entirely dumb, to ask him this plain, pertinent, pointed question, "Art thou wiser than Daniel?"

Another important reflection naturally suggested by the conduct of this able statesman is, that civil rulers have no occasion for the use of art or intrigue in any of their public measures. Those who conduct the intricate affairs of government ought to be wise and prudent; but yet they should never be artful or designing. There are, however, professed politicians, who recommend this mode of conduct by precept as well as example. They insinuate that no man can succeed in political affairs without taking advantage of the weakness, folly, and caprice of human nature, and making use of meas-

* Bryant on Ancient Mythology.

ures which are diametrically opposite to every idea of integrity. Some grave writers on moral and political philosophy, plainly inculcate the first principles of injustice and duplicity. They lay it down as a maxim, that politicians may and ought to make *utility*, or what they conceive to be the general good, the supreme rule of their conduct. But a great and good ruler will adopt and act upon a far more honest and noble principle: "Let justice be done, though the universe should sink." Daniel found wisdom and integrity abundantly sufficient to answer all his political purposes, without ever stooping to the low arts of intrigue. These he was able to describe, and these he was able to defeat. In drawing the characters of the king of the north, and of the king of the south, he gave a lively and striking picture of two profoundly artful and intriguing politicians. "And both these kings' hearts shall be to do mischief, and they shall speak lies at one table; but it shall not prosper." Whilst he presided over a hundred and twenty princes, he clearly and sensibly perceived the nature and tendency of that diabolical policy which they employed to take away his life. But he opposed honesty to dishonesty; justice to injustice; wisdom to cunning; and open integrity to all their dark and deep designs. Nor did he fail of confounding their counsels, and of turning their own artful and malicious devices to their own destruction. Truly wise and upright politicians will never find occasion to employ any other weapon than perfect integrity, in order to defeat the pernicious purposes of their most subtile and malignant enemies, whether at home or abroad. Be it so, that our present connection with distant nations may expose us to the arts and intrigues of foreign courts; yet those who have the direction of our national concerns may rely upon it, that a fair, open, upright conduct will be the best method to frustrate the art, the duplicity, and unjust policy of five, or of five hundred unprincipled politicians.

This naturally leads me to observe, in the last place, that civil rulers have sufficient encouragement to be faithful in the discharge of all their public duties. These I shall not go out of my province to prescribe, nor even to suggest. If public men are only faithful, there is no ground of anxiety about the wisdom or propriety of their public measures. Faithfulness, however, cannot be too often or too forcibly inculcated upon those who have many opportunities, and of course many temptations to betray their trusts. But it is happy to reflect, that their encouragement to fidelity is abundantly sufficient to balance all their unfavorable circumstances. The favor of God, and the esteem of men, are the most animating motives to duty. These had a commanding influence over the views and

conduct of one of the most able and upright rulers. Daniel found by happy experience, that honesty was the best policy. For his faithfulness to the Deity secured his favor and assistance; and his fidelity to men secured their sincere and warm attachment to his person and interest. As he constantly persevered and increased in integrity, so he constantly increased in wealth, in honor, and outward prosperity. Let who would fall, Daniel stood. Let who would sink, Daniel rose. Let who would be in power, Daniel was their favorite. Let who would combine against him, Daniel always succeeded and prospered.

Is not this example worthy of the notice and imitation of all who sit in the seats of government? And may I not, with great propriety, take occasion from it, to press the duty of fidelity upon the honorable legislature of this Commonwealth, which holds the first rank in the United States for piety and virtue, as well as political importance? This large and religious community are devoutly wishing and praying for a faithful administration of government. They would shudder at the thought, that their rulers should lift their hands to Heaven, and solemnly engage to administer a government which they meant to undermine, and to protect a people whom they meant to destroy. Their minds are alarmed at threatening dangers; and nothing can give them ease but an unshaken confidence in the fidelity of their rulers. They do not distrust their abilities; but they may entertain some apprehensions respecting their integrity, since their enemies boast of corrupting it. But if those who direct our public affairs would only display the piety, the integrity, and firmness of Daniel, they would undoubtedly possess the entire affection and confidence of this great and intelligent people. Indeed, some of the first characters in this legislature have already merited and secured the esteem and attachment of an enlightened part, and were it not invidious, I would add, of the most enlightened part of this Commonwealth. Notwithstanding the weakness and prejudice of some, we esteem it a favorable circumstance that his Excellency has heretofore filled a dignified station, in which he had a peculiar opportunity of discovering his uprightness, and at the same time of forgetting the subtilties and of imbibing the genuine spirit of the laws. This, and all the States in the Union, are much indebted to many eminent civilians, for the knowledge, the wisdom, and the integrity, which they displayed in framing the federal constitution; which is not, and perhaps never will be, inferior to any one of mere human invention. This excellent constitution is the basis of all our national safety and happiness. And it is extremely difficult to conceive, that

a single American who is friendly to any good government should be unfriendly to his own, and wish to alienate the affections of the people from it. But it is very natural to conclude, that the framers of the Constitution, and those who were personally concerned in adopting it, should cherish an uncommon attachment to it, and labor to support it with distinguished ardor and zeal. Upon this ground, the people have a just right to expect that His Excellency will never mar the production of his own hands, nor renounce those political principles which he has publicly and solemnly sanctioned, and which have had their proper influence in raising him to the head of this commonwealth.

His Honor the lieutenant-governor, and the principal members of the council, of the senate, and of the house of representatives, have not only gained the suffrages, but what is far more honorable and desirable, the confidence of the people, who sincerely esteem them for their able and faithful services. May this operate as a powerful and endearing motive to future fidelity and zeal in the discharge of their important trusts. The greatest of all the men of the East was highly gratified and animated by the sincere affection of his grateful and dutiful subjects. "When I went out to the gate through the city, when I prepared my seat in the street, the young men saw me and hid themselves; and the aged arose and stood up. When the ear heard me, then it blessed me; and when the eye saw me, it gave witness to me: because I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him. I put on righteousness, and it clothed me: my judgment was as a robe and diadem. I broke the jaws of the wicked, and plucked the spoil out of his teeth."

Such, sincerely respected rulers, are the consoling reflections which naturally flow from fidelity in public life. If therefore you have begun to be faithful in your various departments, be not weary in well-doing; but be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the service of God, and of your generation. Cherish a warm attachment to the government which you are called to administer, and do all the public good which both the state and federal constitutions require and enable you to do. Guide this people in the integrity of your hearts and by the skilfulness of your hands. Exhibit before them a shining example of piety and virtue, and employ all your honor and influence to promote their spiritual as well as temporal good. This wise and faithful discharge of your public trusts will finally put you into the full possession of that transporting promise, which is emphatically yours: "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that

turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever." But if any of you should be conscious to yourselves that you have been unfaithful, unjust, and unholy, let Daniel's counsel be acceptable to you, and "break off your sins by righteousness and your iniquities by showing mercy to the poor, that it may be a lengthening of your tranquillity." For it is most certainly true, that if you cast off fear and restrain prayer before God, and despise all his warnings and admonitions, the day is coming, when that invisible hand which is now recording all your deeds will write on the table of your hearts, in a language which will need no interpreter, this final and fearful sentence: "You are weighed in the balances, and are found wanting."

SERMON IX.

OBEDIENCE TO CIVIL MAGISTRATES.

NATIONAL FAST, APRIL 25, 1799.

Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work. — Titus, iii. 1.

Heathens and infidels have always been disposed to represent the friends of revealed religion as enemies to the peace and order of civil society. The nations bordering upon Jerusalem basely insinuated that "it was a rebellious city, hurtful to kings and provinces." The unbelieving Jews accused our Saviour of being opposed to Cæsar and to the laws of his country. And it was a very common practice among the pagans to cast the odium of their own seditions and insurrections upon the peaceable and harmless christians. To wipe off this aspersion from the followers of Christ, the apostle Paul, who was a Roman citizen, and well understood the nature and importance of civil government, abundantly inculcated the duty of submission to those in authority. Nor did he stop here, but exhorted other preachers of the gospel to inculcate the same duty upon all the professors of religion. Knowing the general reluctance of mankind to legal restraint, and the peculiar prejudice of the Jewish converts against pagan princes, he expressly enjoined it upon Titus, "to put his hearers in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, and to obey magistrates." By these appellations he meant to denote all orders and ranks of civil officers, under all forms of civil government. This therefore is the plain and practical truth which falls under our present consideration:

That ministers ought to inculcate upon subjects the duty of obedience to civil rulers.

Here it may be proper to show,

I. Who are to be understood by civil rulers.

II. That it is the duty of subjects to obey them: and

III. That ministers ought to inculcate this duty.

I. Let us consider who are to be understood by civil rulers.

Though God has not seen fit, under the gospel dispensation, to institute any particular form of civil government, yet he has prescribed the qualifications and duties of civil rulers. And we can hardly suppose that he would delineate the duties and qualifications of a certain order of men, which he neither approved nor intended should exist. It is therefore evidently the will of God, that there should be civil government, and that there should be a certain order of men to administer it. In this sense, we may consider civil government as the ordinance of God, and civil rulers as the ministers of God, though they derive all their authority from their fellow citizens. But the question before us is, who are to be understood by civil rulers, to whom submission is due? This seems to be a plain question, though it has been much agitated by the greatest statesmen and divines. Reason and scripture concur to teach us, that the powers that be, or those who are in peaceable possession of civil authority, are the magistrates whom we ought to obey.

There are three ways of men's coming into possession of civil power. One way, and indeed the best way, is by the free and fair election of the people; who, in every republican government, enjoy the right of choosing their own rulers. This right generally is and always ought to be restricted to persons of a certain character and interest. Those who are so dependent as to have no will of their own are totally disqualified to give their suffrages for civil magistrates. Such men however as are fairly chosen into office by the people are properly civil rulers, and to be acknowledged and treated accordingly.

Another way in which men may become clothed with civil authority is by hereditary right. Any people may make their government hereditary if they please. And after they have adopted such a form of government, men may come into power by succession, without any formal election. The eldest son of a king, for instance, may be the rightful heir to the throne, and upon his father's decease, abdication, or removal, may take possession of it without the voice of the people.

The last and worst way of men's coming into the seat of government is by usurpation. This method of obtaining power has been much practiced in all ages of the world. A son has often usurped the throne of his father. A prime minister or a peculiar favorite has often usurped the throne of his

master. An enterprising and successful general has often turned his arms against his sovereign, and placed himself in his room. Though the conduct of usurpers is to be condemned and detested, yet after the people have through fear or feebleness acknowledged their supremacy, they are to all intents and purposes civil rulers, to whom obedience and subjection belong. It must be supposed that the apostle meant to include sovereigns of this description among "principalities and powers" in the text. For it is well known that many of the primitive christians lived under the government of usurpers. Most of the sovereigns in the first ages of christianity had unrighteously seized the thrones which they filled. And if christians were to obey the principalities and powers then in being, they were to obey those who came into power by unjust and unlawful means. Indeed, there seems to be an obvious reason why such men should be obeyed. After usurpers are peaceably established in their dominions, the people explicitly or implicitly engage to submit to their authority. Though they promised submission with reluctance, yet, having promised, their promise is morally binding. Besides, those who have violently seized the reins of government may afterwards be very good rulers. And it matters not whether they rule by written or verbal laws, provided they rule in wisdom and equity. So long as they employ their power to promote the public good, the people have reason to lead peaceable and quiet lives in all godliness and honesty. As Augustus Cæsar used his usurped power with great moderation during his long and gentle reign, so the Romans were as much obliged to obey his authority as if he had come to the throne by the free and general voice of the empire. But not to enlarge upon this topic at present, I would say in a word, that by civil rulers in the text and in this discourse, are to be understood all those who are in the peaceable possession of civil power. I proceed to show,

II. That it is the duty of subjects to obey their civil rulers. And this will appear, if we consider,

1. That the scripture expressly enjoins this duty upon subjects. The apostle Paul requires them to "be subject to principalities and powers, and to obey magistrates." The apostle Peter in his first epistle, exhorts believers to be good subjects of civil government, in order to adorn their christian profession, and recommend their religion to those who were strongly prejudiced against it. "Dearly beloved," says he, "I beseech you to have your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that whereas they speak against you as evil doers, they may by your good works which they shall behold, glorify

God in the day of visitation. Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man, for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well-doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men." There is another passage in the thirteenth of Romans, which more fully and forcibly inculcates upon all the great duty of submission to civil magistrates. "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same. For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience' sake. For, for this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers attending upon this very thing." Here submission to those in authority is most expressly enjoined upon all, as a moral and christian duty. Many passages of a similar import might be adduced from the Old Testament; but I choose to draw the proof of this duty from the precepts of christianity, which are unquestionably binding upon subjects at this day, under whatever form of government they live.

2. The duty of submission naturally results from the relation which subjects bear to their rulers. There would be no propriety in calling the body of the people subjects, unless they were under obligation to obey those in the administration of government. Every people either directly or indirectly promise submission to their rulers. Those who choose their civil magistrates do voluntarily pledge their obedience, whether they take the oath of allegiance or not. By putting power into the hands of their rulers, they put it out of their own; by choosing and authorizing them to govern, they practically declare that they are willing to be governed; and by declaring their willingness to be governed, they equally declare their intention and readiness to obey. In every free government the rulers and the ruled lay themselves under mutual obligations to each other. For a free government is founded in compact; and every compact, whether private or public, invariably binds all the parties concerned. The subjects of every

elective government, therefore, voluntarily and expressly engage to obey those whom they raise to places of power and trust. And as to such as live under different forms of government, they also indirectly and implicitly promise submission to the powers that be. Hence all subjects owe obedience to the civil magistrates by virtue of their own actual engagements. There is not a single exception in this case. The man who is born after a government is established, is as much obliged to submit to it, as if he had lived while it was framing, and had actually assisted in framing it. The man who is born after an usurper has taken the supreme power, is as much obliged to submit to him as if he had lived in the time of the revolution, and had personally consented to his sovereignty. Every person is born the subject of some government, and has no right, when he comes upon the stage of action, to refuse obedience to those who are in the peaceable possession of civil power. There are no detached individuals in any civil community; but all are members of the body politic, and universally bound by their own explicit or implicit consent, to pay obedience and subjection to those whom they have either chosen or allowed to sit in the seats of government.

I may add,

3. All subjects ought to obey their rulers for the sake of the public good. It is the duty of civil magistrates to seek the general welfare of the people; and so long as they diligently and faithfully attend upon this very thing, they justly merit the obedience and concurrence of every one of their subjects. For every person ought to desire, and as far as he can, contribute to, the peace and prosperity of that community to which he belongs. Let a civil constitution be ever so good, it can answer no valuable purpose, unless the people will submit to those in administration. Rulers are mere ciphers without the aid and concurrence of their subjects. What can a general do to defend his country, if his soldiers refuse to fight? And what can the supreme magistrate do to maintain the peace and order of society, if his subjects refuse to obey? All the benefit to be derived from civil government ultimately depends upon the people's obedience to civil rulers. The subject therefore is under moral obligation, resulting from the general good, to submit to the civil magistrate. And agreeably to this, the apostle says, "He is the minister of God to thee for good. Wherefore ye must needs be subject not only for wrath, but also for conscience' sake." As the conscience of every man tells him he ought to seek the general good; so it equally tells him he ought to obey the higher powers, who are seeking the same desirable and important end.

Thus the people, in every civil society, are universally bound by the general good, as well as by their own engagements and the authority of God, to pay a cordial and conscientious obedience to all the officers of government. I now proceed to show,

III. That ministers ought to inculcate such submission to civil magistrates.

Here permit me to observe,

1. That preachers are expressly required to press this plain and important duty upon the people of their charge. "Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, and to obey magistrates." The apostle wrote this epistle on purpose to direct a minister of the gospel how to conduct in his sacred office. And, instead of warning him against being too officious in treating upon the delicate subject of submission to government, he commands him, without fear or favor, to admonish his hearers of their indispensable obligation to obey every order of civil magistrates. There appears no circumstance of time or place, to restrict this injunction to Titus in particular; and therefore, we must suppose, that it equally applies to all the preachers of the gospel, in every age of christianity. It is beyond doubt, that the apostle intended, by the precept in the text, to teach not only Titus, but all succeeding ministers, the great importance of inculcating upon subjects that obedience and submission which they owe to all in authority, from the highest to the lowest.

2. It becomes the preachers of the gospel, in this case, to follow the example of the inspired teachers. John the Baptist repeatedly inculcated submission to civil authority. When some of the Publicans were about to be baptized, they seriously asked him, "Master, what shall we do?" Shall we relinquish our civil employment, and no longer gather the public taxes? "And he said unto them, Exact no more than that which is appointed you." Defraud not the public to promote your own private interest, nor disobey the lawful authority under which you act. At the same time, "the soldiers likewise demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do?" Shall we cease to be soldiers, and refuse to obey our officers? "And he said unto them, Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages." Slay only your public enemies; abuse none of your fellow soldiers; and cheerfully take the lot and perform the duties assigned you. Our Saviour taught the same doctrine. On a certain occasion, the Pharisees sent unto him their disciples, with the Herodians, saying, "Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth; tell us, therefore, what

thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Cæsar or not? Then said he unto them, Render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's; and unto God the things that are God's." This was a plain and explicit command to be subject to principalities and powers, and to obey magistrates. The apostles strictly followed the example of their divine Master, and forcibly inculcated upon subjects the duty of submission to all in authority, whether kings or governors, or more subordinate rulers. These examples are worthy of the attention and imitation of all the ministers of the gospel. Though in some cases they have no right to imitate Christ and the apostles, yet no reason can be assigned why they should not follow their example in ordinary preaching, and inculcate upon subjects the same submission to government which those infallible preachers inculcated.

3. It no less belongs to the office of gospel ministers, to teach men their duty towards civil rulers, than to teach them any other moral or religious duty. This appears from the manner in which the apostle commands Titus to address the various characters among his people. He first directs him to instruct the aged, the young, and those in a state of servitude; and then immediately exhorts him to "put all persons in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work, to speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, showing all meekness to all men." In this connection, the apostle plainly teaches ministers, that they are under the same obligation to inculcate upon their hearers the duty of submitting to civil rulers, as to exhort them to be peaceable, and gentle, and ready to every good work. It is an essential branch of the ministerial office, to explain and inculcate all the duties which God has enjoined upon all persons of every age, relation, and connection of life. Those in the gospel ministry, therefore, as truly act in character and agreeably to their sacred office, while they teach and exhort subjects to obey magistrates, as while they teach and exhort them to love God with all the heart, or to love their neighbors as themselves. And I may still farther observe,

4. That there are some peculiar reasons, why the duty of submission to civil authority should be more especially inculcated upon the minds of subjects. Men are extremely apt to forget that they are under any moral obligation to obey the rulers of the land. This the apostle plainly suggests, by his mode of expression in the text. "Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers." The people are very ready to imagine that there is no moral evil in violating the laws of their country. They are much more disposed to regard

the power, than the authority, of civil magistrates. If they obey, it is for wrath, and not for conscience' sake. If they disobey, they feel no remorse nor regret, unless they receive the due reward of their deeds. How frequently are the good and wholesome laws against gaming, tavern-haunting, Sabbath-breaking, and such like evils, trampled upon by multitudes, without once reflecting that they have poured contempt upon the ordinance of God. The general respect paid to civil authority seems to be much more owing to a principle of prudence, than to a sense of duty. Hence there appears to be a peculiar necessity of inculcating the duty of obedience and submission to all orders of civil rulers. As no duty is more generally forgotten or neglected than this, so no duty needs to be more frequently and powerfully inculcated.

Besides, there is scarcely any duty more disagreeable to the human heart, than submission to civil government. Men are naturally unwilling to be controlled, and especially by human laws, the reasons of which they seldom understand. Some have no capacity, some have no inclination, and some have no opportunity, to examine the wisdom and rectitude of public measures. But even supposing that those in administration could demonstrate to the apprehension of every individual that all the laws and measures of government were calculated to promote the general good, yet there is no reason to think that this would satisfy the minds of people in general. For the public good is a light object, when thrown into the scale against private interest. Just so long, therefore, as men are disposed to prefer private good to public, they will feel a strong reluctance to that obedience and submission which they owe to civil rulers. And since it is well known that this is the prevailing disposition of mankind, it must be granted that subjects need to be often and solemnly admonished to sacrifice their private interest to the public good, and submit to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake.

There is still another plain and important reason, why submission to government should be strongly inculcated. The safety and happiness of the whole body politic more essentially depend upon each member's performing this, than any other duty. A subject may neglect any other duty, and injure only himself, or a few individuals with whom he is intimately connected. But if he rise against government, or disobey the laws of the land, his disobedience is like the disobedience of a sentinel, who exposes both himself and the whole army to destruction. A seditious and disorganizing spirit is extremely contagious. It will suddenly and almost imperceptibly inflame the minds of the largest people. And when this spirit once

seizes the majority, neither their numbers, nor their riches, nor their arms can afford them the least protection. The most excellent and patriotic rulers, and the most peaceable and virtuous citizens, are liable to fall victims to the fury and revenge of lawless and ungovernable rebels. Where there is no subordination, there can be no government; and where there is no government, there can be no public peace nor safety. Such an absolute necessity of submission to civil authority, in every civil community, renders this duty of the highest political importance. And this importance loudly calls upon the ministers of the gospel of peace, to inculcate upon subjects, in the most plain and pungent manner, their indispensable obligation to be subject to principalities and powers, and to obey magistrates of every order and distinction.

This subject now suggests some seasonable and useful reflections.

1. There is no ground to complain of the ministers of the gospel, for inculcating political duties. Those who dislike public men and public measures are very apt to complain of preachers, if they undertake to adapt their discourses to the present state of public affairs, and press obedience and subjection to the powers that be. In the beginning of this century, there was a party in Britain, friendly to the Pretender, who bitterly complained of Bishop Hoadly and other clergymen, for supporting the house of Hanover, and inculcating loyalty and subjection to those in the peaceable possession of the reins of government. And there are many now in America, who are friendly to France, and who publicly reproach those preachers of the gospel who presume, at this interesting crisis of public affairs, to step forth in the cause of their country, and inculcate the duty of submission to those patriotic rulers who are seeking the safety and interest of the nation. But if what has been said in this discourse be true, their complaint of the clergy is altogether unscriptural, unreasonable, and inconsistent. It is unscriptural; because ministers are required by the precepts of the gospel and the practice of Christ and the apostles, to inculcate submission to government. It is unreasonable; because ministers have the common right of citizens to form their own opinions and to speak their own sentiments, upon such public measures as relate not merely to the local politics of a town or parish, but to the great body of the nation. And it is inconsistent; because those who complain are highly pleased to hear ministers preach in favor of the government they like, and in support of the measures they approve. They now condemn the same kind of preaching which, less than twenty years ago, they highly applauded. They have no real objection against

political preaching, but against what is preached upon political subjects. It is readily admitted, if ministers recommend tyranny to rulers, or sedition to subjects, they deserve to be censured; but on the other hand, if they preach sound doctrine in politics and morals, their preaching ought to be candidly heard and religiously followed. And for my own part, I verily believe there is now a special call in providence to all the ministers of the gospel, to put men in mind of the duty and importance of supporting the constitution, and submitting to the administration of our present free and excellent government.

2. There appears to be no more difficulty in determining the measure of submission to civil government, than the measure of submission to any other human authority. Volumes have been written in favor of passive obedience and non-resistance to the higher powers; and volumes have been written in opposition to this absurd and detestable doctrine. But notwithstanding all the learning and ingenuity which have been displayed on both sides of this question, and the remaining diversity of opinion upon it, it seems to be attended with no peculiar difficulty but what arises from the selfish views and feelings of mankind. Many cannot endure the idea of submission to civil authority, unless it be so qualified, softened, and limited, as to allow them to disobey and resist their rulers, whenever their private opinion or personal interest requires it. But God enjoins submission to all human authority, in the same general and unlimited terms. The scripture requires subjects "to submit themselves to every ordinance of man, for the Lord's sake." The scripture requires children "to obey their parents in all things." And the scripture requires servants "to obey, in all things, them that are their masters according to the flesh." Who can discover, upon reading these precepts given to subjects, servants, and children, the least difference in the measure of submission? But though the scripture nowhere prescribes the measure of submission to government, yet it is the plain dictate of reason, that all submission to human authority is absolutely limited. Servants, and even slaves, have the right of private judgment, and may, in certain cases, justly refuse obedience to their masters, and oppose their authority. Children have the right of private judgment, and may, in certain cases, refuse obedience to their parents, and resist unto blood. So subjects have the right of private judgment, and may, in certain cases, refuse submission to those in authority, and even destroy them. But all moral agents, who have the right of private judgment, are accountable for their exercise of it. If servants resist their masters without reason, they deserve to be punished. If children resist their parents without reason,

they deserve to be punished. And if subjects rise in opposition to government without reason, they deserve to suffer as criminals. In short, every subject who resists the powers that be, is either a patriot or a rebel, and ought to be considered and treated as such. The reason why no divine nor human law fixes the measure of submission to human authority, is because the cases in which it may be right to resist cannot be ascertained until they actually occur. Though we know beforehand that there are measures of submission to all human authority, yet no man can determine what they are, until cases actually take place, which will justify resistance. Who can tell when a servant may justly rise against his master and destroy his life? None will pretend, that every time he feels provoked, or thinks himself injured, he may rise and redress his supposed grievances. Children often imagine they are abused, when their parents reprove, restrain, or correct them; but will any say, that, in all such cases, they have a right to resist parental authority? It also appears from observation and experience, that subjects are apt to think themselves injured and oppressed, when they are heavily taxed, or called upon to support and defend their government; but who will maintain, that every supposed or real grievance will justify resistance to legal authority? Though rulers ought not to injure any of their subjects, yet individuals cannot be justified in disturbing the public peace, for the sake of redressing their own private wrongs. Hence it is easy to see, that there is no more nor less difficulty in ascertaining the proper measure of submission to civil government, than the proper measure of submission to any other human authority. There is nothing but absolute necessity that can justify a people in breaking the bands of society. It is theirs to judge when such necessity exists, and to judge according to truth. For, if they either ignorantly or wilfully rise against their rulers, without just cause, they act the part of rebels; and if there be power and virtue enough in government, they must be restrained and punished.

3. It is extremely criminal to disobey civil rulers, and oppose the regular administration of government. There is a strong propensity in mankind to trample upon human authority, and obstruct the execution of the most wise and salutary laws; and this unruly spirit infatuates their minds, and leads them to imagine that there is little or no criminality in striking at the foundation of public peace and safety. Indeed, many consider a restless, discontented, seditious spirit as virtuous rather than sinful; and would be thought to be acting a noble, manly, patriotic part, while they are weakening the hands of rulers, and destroying the energy of government. But such persons

ought seriously to consider, that they are violating their own voluntary engagements, opposing the public good, and disobeying the express commands of the Supreme Ruler of the universe. These sacred and solemn obligations bind their consciences to obedience and submission; and their guilt in disobeying and opposing the laws of the land is in proportion to the obligations they violate. The scripture calls those who are enemies and opposers of government, heady, high minded, truce-breakers, and traitors; and represents them as deserving to be punished not only in this life, but in that which is to come. It is true, indeed, all transgressions of human as well as divine laws are not equally heinous. The violation of some civil laws is so common, and so generally winked at, that it may be supposed to be owing to ignorance or inattention, rather than to a deliberate and wicked design. But when subjects knowingly and violently oppose the laws of the land, and aim to overturn the pillars of government, they contract a heavy load of guilt, and expose themselves to the heavy hand of human and divine justice.

4. It is criminal not only to disobey and resist civil authority, but also to countenance, cherish, and inflame a spirit of disobedience and rebellion. This is often done by some great and influential men, who are either afraid or ashamed to appear in open opposition to government. Those who wish to weaken the hands of rulers, and to pave the way to anarchy and confusion, very often conceal their views, while they use every means in their power to diffuse a spirit of discord and sedition in the minds of the people. They speak evil of dignities. They represent the most wise and upright rulers as acting from mean, mercenary, and arbitrary motives, and aiming to enrich and aggrandize themselves. They complain of their public measures, and insinuate that they are systematically calculated to enslave and destroy the people. They represent wise laws to be unwise; just laws to be unjust; necessary laws to be unnecessary; and constitutional laws to be unconstitutional. And if these methods of inflaming the passions of the populace against their rulers be not sufficient to answer their purpose, they have recourse to another, which is next to irresistible; I mean bribery. This engine both ancient and modern nations have employed to promote conspiracies, insurrections, and rebellions against government. The French have of late carried the art of bribery to the highest degree of perfection. According to the best accounts, they have corrupted every people whom they have subjugated, by this diabolical method. These are the means which artful and designing men employ, to diffuse a disobedient and rebellious spirit into

the minds of those who are unacquainted with public affairs. And we have great reason to believe, that not a few are now secretly exerting all their influence to propagate such a dangerous spirit. We clearly discover such a strong and zealous opposition to government, as cannot be accounted for by any visible cause. There must be, therefore, some men behind the curtain, who are pushing on the populace to open sedition and rebellion. It is highly probable, that the late insurgents in Pennsylvania were corrupted and deluded by some artful and influential characters, who have chosen to lie concealed from the public eye. And it is no less probable, that those unhappy creatures still really believe, that many of the populace and some of the principal men in all the United States, secretly approve and applaud their insurrection, as a bold and noble act of patriotism. But those who thus secretly cherish and inflame a seditious and rebellious spirit, are of all subjects the meanest and vilest. They do more mischief and contract more guilt, than the poor, deluded, infatuated mortals, who actually rise in rebellion, and attempt the subversion of government.

5. Those in executive authority are under indispensable obligation to give rebels and traitors a just recompense of reward. They are God's ministers to execute wrath upon them that do evil; and they ought not to hold the sword of justice in vain. They are not only to countenance and encourage obedience, but to discountenance and discourage disobedience. They are not only to reward them that do well, but to punish the lawless and disobedient, as a terror to all their subjects. It is true indeed, they ought to make distinctions among the guilty, and apportion their punishments according to the nature and aggravations of their crimes. Though they may with propriety appear lenient towards ignorant and deluded transgressors, yet the general good of society requires them to make examples of some at least of the more bold and malignant enemies of government. The best laws will soon lose their force if they be not duly executed, and the transgressors of them generally entertain a hope of impunity. Though the penalties of the laws should be lenient, yet the execution of them should be speedy and rigid. For it is not the penalty of the law, but the execution of it, that strikes terror into the minds of rebels. Rebellion is a heinous crime, and deserves a severe punishment; and yet there is scarcely any crime which the great body of the people more ardently desire should be treated with lenity. They can coolly if not cheerfully see the murderer, money-maker, or the thief, receive the due reward of his deeds; but they are extremely apt to pity and endeavor to screen the insurgent or rebel from condign punishment. This

compassion towards the disturbers of the public peace has been carried far enough, if not too far, in both the northern and southern states. It seriously concerns those who are intrusted with the execution of the laws to reflect that "the judgment is God's," and that he allows them not to fear the face of man, nor to indulge that tender mercy towards the enemies of government, which would prove cruelty to their most virtuous and peaceable subjects.

6. The present appearance of a seditious and rebellious spirit in this happy country is extremely alarming. This spirit has often appeared in the world, and produced the most fatal effects. When the spies returned from searching the land of promise, a spirit of rebellion broke out in the camp of Israel. And though Moses and Aaron on that occasion fell on their faces before all the assembly of the congregation of the children of Israel; and Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, employed the whole force of their eloquence to persuade the deluded and infatuated rebels to go forward and take possession of the land of Canaan; yet they absolutely refused to obey the authority of their wise and faithful rulers. This was highly displeasing to God, who doomed them to wander and perish in the wilderness; while he safely conducted the dutiful and obedient to a land flowing with milk and honey. The last time Jerusalem was besieged, a spirit of sedition proved fatal to the city and to millions of its deluded inhabitants. The French were happy in their new-modelled government until a spirit of rebellion broke out and destroyed their monarch, their nobility, their clergy, and their wisest and best citizens. Switzerland, which lately contained a number of rich, flourishing, united states, is now groaning under the fatal effects of a seditious and rebellious spirit. The same spirit has once and again disturbed the peace of America. At the close of the last war a spirit of opposition to the commutation act appeared in Connecticut, but was easily and happily nipped in the bud. Some time after, a levelling spirit prevailed in this Commonwealth, and produced a formidable insurrection against the courts of justice, which it required a military force to suppress. Since the establishment of our present general government, some of its enemies at the southward took up arms, and violently opposed the collection of duties on distilled liquors. To reduce those sons of sedition to reason and to order, was extremely troublesome and expensive to the public. And this year the same turbulent and rebellious spirit has appeared again, and rendered it necessary to call forth an armed force against the opposers of government. The present appearance therefore is truly alarming. Though but small

numbers have yet openly and violently opposed the laws of the land, yet the leaven of rebellion has evidently poisoned the minds of many in various parts of the Union. It is yet unknown what will be the effect of either lenient or severe measures towards those who are now in the hands of public justice. The people feel deeply interested in the fate of disorganizers and insurgents. This however is certain, that unless a spirit of sedition can be effectually suppressed, and a spirit of subordination effectually established, there can be no peace nor safety to these United States. A very wise and experienced ruler has said, "Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft." It is not only very contagious, but extremely infatuating. It deprives men of all sober reasoning and reflection. This is demonstrated by the effects which it has already produced amongst us. Some very honest and in other respects very judicious people have already become deaf and blind. They cannot see the increasing light thrown upon the dark designs of France, nor hear the voice of the most wise and enlightened statesmen. This presages a rapid progress of the present spirit of infatuation. And should this continue and increase, it will naturally produce one or the other of these deplorable effects. It will either bring on a general civil war, and reduce us to the dreadful system of liberty and equality; or it will render it absolutely necessary to tighten the reins of government, and lay stronger restraints upon the tongues, the pens, the hands, and the liberties, of those who are now complaining of our free government and its wise and gentle administration. We may all be satisfied that our general government will never be altered for the worse, so long as we remain heartily attached to it, and will faithfully exercise our right of choosing upright and able rulers, who understand the nature and estimate the worth of our excellent constitution. But though the present prospect is, that the prevailing spirit of sedition and rebellion will be eventually suppressed; yet there is ground to fear, that if much time, great exertions, and large sums of money be employed to suppress it, the body of the people will be so irritated that they will choose to have government strengthened and their liberties abridged, rather than be perpetually exposed to the dire effects of sedition, insurrection, and rebellion. Nothing, therefore, can prevent the horrors of civil war, or the loss of our civil liberties, but the effectual suppression of that seditious spirit which refuses to be subject to principalities and powers, and to obey magistrates.

7. It is just ground of humiliation before God, this day, that our free, flourishing, and highly favored nation has become so averse to submission to civil government. There is no nation in the world who have better laws than the people of

America; and yet there is no nation, perhaps, who pay so little regard to their own laws, as the enlightened citizens of the United States. How are the laws against gaming, profane swearing, sabbath-breaking, and the use of unjust weights and measures, trampled upon by all classes of people! And what a daring spirit of sedition and rebellion is making its dreadful appearance through every corner of our land! These are national sins; and these national sins are extremely aggravated. No nation on earth knows its obligations to obey magistrates, and submit to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, better than we do. From the first settlement of our country to nearly the present period, we have been habituated to pay submission to every species of human authority. And we still enjoy the sacred oracles, and religious instruction from sabbath to sabbath. These circumstances greatly enhance the guilt of our national disobedience and licentiousness. Let us lament the prevalence of these land-defiling iniquities. It is the proper duty and business of the day. And unless we sincerely perform this duty, this day will increase our national guilt, and ripen us for national ruin.

8. It is extremely impolitic as well as criminal, in civil rulers, to reject christianity themselves, and to endeavor to make their subjects reject it. It is well known, that some of our civil magistrates who fill high seats in government, are become apostles of infidelity, and represent it as conducive to liberty and equality, and the most perfect state of civil society. But what evidence can they find in Scripture, in reason, or in experience, to establish their bold and novel opinion. It appears from what has been said in this discourse, that christianity is calculated to strengthen the sinews of government. It commands rulers to be faithful to their trusts, and subjects to be obedient to all in authority. And it enforces these commands, by the weighty motives of eternity. It is also the dictate of reason, that the spirit of christianity, which is the spirit of pure disinterested benevolence, forms the best rulers and the best subjects, and eminently qualifies both for the different stations they hold in society. And when or where was it ever found by experience, that atheism, deism, or infidelity, had a favorable influence upon the peace and happiness of a civilized people? But one nation in the world have made the experiment, and they have nothing to boast of their new discovery. What tremendous havoc has infidelity made among all orders and classes of men in the French nation, and in all the nations whom they have sacrilegiously regenerated! It is astonishing, that learned statesmen should not only embrace the principles of infidelity, but even propagate such loose and immoral senti-

ments. If they would consult only their personal power and influence, and the present good of society, they would certainly recommend revealed religion, and sincerely desire that the great body of the people might imbibe its spirit, and act under its powerful and benign influence.

9. It now only remains, my hearers, to put you in mind of your duty, at the present critical and alarming crisis. You see a spirit of disaffection and opposition to government prevailing among your countrymen. You have heretofore felt, and begin to feel again, the bitter effects of such a disorganizing spirit. You know the reasons, or rather pretences, which the uneasy and discontented allege for their opposition to public men and public measures. You have heard the duty and necessity of submitting to government briefly described and inculcated. It now seriously concerns you, as you regard your consciences and your country, to appear openly and decidedly in favor of your laws and of your rulers. Speak well of their characters, and duly appreciate their late noble and spirited measures. Reflect upon the plain and obvious reasons upon which the sedition and alien laws are founded, and upon the urgent necessity of heavy taxes for the public defence. Can you hesitate a moment, whether it be possible to maintain your national independence, without being armed, both by land and sea, against both foreign and domestic enemies? Where can be our safety, if the navies of Europe are suffered to sail into our ports and harbors without the least obstruction? What can hinder a sudden and awful revolution of government, if the counsels of those be followed, who are insidiously aiming to bring about such a dreadful catastrophe? Open your eyes upon the fate of other nations, and attend more to the conduct than to the language of the French republic, who have long fixed their ardent wishes upon the fertile fields of America, and left no measure untried, to deceive us to our own destruction. Think not that you shall cease to be subject to principalities and powers, if the great nation take you under its wing. Though they have given different appellations to magistrates, yet they have not weakened their hands, nor shortened their swords. "The powers that be," in that tyrannical nation, are more to be dreaded than a Nero or Caligula. There appears to be but one way to escape the dangers to which you are exposed, and that is, to obey your present wise, firm, faithful magistrates, and cheerfully concur in their wise and prudent measures to guard you against French infidelity and French tyranny. "Submit yourselves, therefore, to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake; and lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour." Amen.

SERMON X.

GREAT MEN THE SERVANTS OF GOD.

DEATH OF WASHINGTON, JANUARY 30, 1800.

For Jacob my servant's sake, and Israel mine elect, I have even called thee by thy name; I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known me. I am the Lord, and there is none else, there is no God beside me; I girded thee, though thou hast not known me. — Isaiah, xlv. 4, 5.

Mankind have always been extremely prone to overlook the hand of God in those events, which he has brought to pass by the instrumentality of subordinate agents. This has often led them to feel and to conduct very improperly under the dispensations of divine Providence. To rectify and prevent such a great practical error, God has been pleased, time after time, to predict some of the most important revolutions in the civil and religious world, and to name or describe the principal agents, by whom they were to be effected. He foretold the descent of Jacob and his family into Egypt, and their preservation there, by the agency of Joseph. He foretold the suppression of idolatry among his degenerate people, by the exertions of Josiah. And in a later period of the Jewish nation, he foretold their long and distressing captivity in Babylon, and their happy deliverance by the instrumentality of a pagan prince. To the character and conduct of this illustrious personage our text has immediate reference. The prediction is truly solemn and sublime; becoming the majesty of the God of Israel and the supreme Sovereign of the universe. "Thus saith the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two-leaved gates;

and the gates shall not be shut. I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight; I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron: And I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that I the Lord, which call thee by thy name, am the God of Israel. For Jacob my servant's sake, and Israel mine elect, I have even called thee by thy name: I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known me. I am the Lord, and there is none else, there is no god beside me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me."

This Cyrus was the son of Cambyses, king of Persia, and of Mandana, the daughter of Astyages, king of Media. He early discovered something great and noble in his nature; and as he advanced in years, he more than answered the raised expectations which his extraordinary virtues and talents had excited. He maintained through a vast variety of scenes, an entire uniformity of character, and never differed from himself, only in that growing greatness, which finally placed him in the first rank of the first men in the world. This great man, God was pleased to name, near two hundred years before he was born, as the principal agent, by whom he intended to deliver his chosen people from their wretched state of captivity, and to punish their powerful and cruel oppressors. Accordingly, in the course of his particular providence over the kingdoms of men, he raised up Cyrus to the zenith of human power and greatness, and made him the free, voluntary instrument of promoting the cause of religion, and the happiness of the world. Hence it appears from this prediction, taken in connection with its wonderful accomplishment,

That God justly claims a sovereign right, to make great men the instruments of executing his wise and benevolent designs.

To illustrate this sentiment, and to impress it upon your minds, my hearers, will be the business of the ensuing discourse.

God claims a supreme right to the services of great men, in almost every page of his word. How often do we hear him saying of this, of that, and of the other great character, he is my servant! How often do we meet with this sovereign language, my servant Moses; my servant Job; my servant Jacob; my servant Israel; my servant Isaiah; my servant Nebuchadnezzar! By such a mode of speaking, God holds up his sovereign right to employ great men just as he pleases, in executing the designs of his providence. But he more fully displays this prerogative, by publishing to the world what great men shall do, before they are brought into being. He claimed

the services of Solomon, the wisest of men, and appointed the business of his life, before he was born. Thus he addressed his royal father, "Behold a son shall be born unto thee, who shall be a man of rest, and I will give him rest from all his enemies round about: for his name shall be Solomon, and I will give peace and quietness unto Israel in his days. He shall build an house for my name; and he shall be my son, and I will be his father; and I will establish the throne of his kingdom over Israel for ever." In the prediction concerning Nebuchadnezzar, God claimed a sovereign right to employ him as the minister of his vengeance, in punishing the people of his wrath. He asserted his absolute divinity and sovereignty, in his prophetic address to Cyrus. "I am the Lord, and there is none else, there is no god beside me. I girded thee, though thou hast not known me." And he displayed the same sovereign right to the powers and influence of great men, in his predictions of Alexander the Great, of Augustus Cæsar, of John the Baptist, the forerunner of Christ, of Constantine the Great, of Mohammed, and of the Man of Sin. The Bible abounds in predictions of future events, to be brought about by the instrumentality of moral agents; and in all such predictions, God has made an absolute claim to the services of those whom he has appointed to fulfil them.

It now appears sufficiently plain, we trust, that God does claim a sovereign right to make great men the instruments of executing his wise and benevolent designs; but our doctrine further asserts, that this claim is absolutely just. We are now come to the most important branch of our subject. And in order to make it appear, that God justly claims the high prerogative of making great men the instruments of doing great good in the world, permit me to observe,

1. That he gives them their superior natural capacity for doing good. He inspires them with that bright and glowing genius, which is the essence of mental greatness, and which distinguishes them from the general mass of mankind. As one star differs from another star in glory, so one man differs from another in the original frame and strength of his mind. There is convincing evidence, that this difference in the intellectual powers of men is not the fruit of cultivation and improvement, but the peculiar gift of Heaven. A great and capacious mind often makes an early appearance, before secondary causes have time to operate upon it. This was observable in Cyrus. Even in his childhood, he discovered an uncommonly strong and elevated genius, which excited the attention and admiration of the best judges of the human understanding. Hence we may justly conclude, the Father of spirits formed his mind, and en-

dowed it with those great and astonishing talents, which he displayed in the course of his extensively useful and important life. In the same manner God furnishes all great men with all their natural powers and abilities to do great and noble actions.

2. He presides over their education, and gives them the means of improving their superior talents, and forming themselves for eminent usefulness. There is reason to think, that a vast many minds of the first magnitude have been buried in obscurity, for the want of proper education and refinement. Had Solomon or Socrates been denied the means of refining and invigorating their original talents, it is altogether probable that they never would have arisen to that peculiar preëminence which they will justly and always hold, in the great family of man. Hence, in forming great men, God takes particular care that they shall receive such an education as will best qualify them for their high stations in society. This appears from one or two memorable instances. Moses was the appointed instrument of delivering his nation from the depression and misery of bondage; and though in his infancy he discovered a lovely mind in a beautiful body, yet God saw it necessary that both should be refined in the court of Pharaoh. And God took particular care of the education of Cyrus. He placed and kept him under the instruction of his father Cambyses, who early instilled into his mind the principles of sobriety, temperance, and every other moral virtue. This virtuous education proved an effectual guard against that luxury, prodigality, and dissipation, to which he was exposed at twelve years old, in the court of Persia. Though his grandfather and his nobility united their efforts to eradicate his virtuous habits and corrupt his morals, yet they could make no impression upon him. He despised their customs and manners, and resolved to escape their pernicious influence by taking shelter under the authority and example of his virtuous father. Here he pursued his studies, and collected a large store of that general knowledge of human nature and the affairs of the world, which eminently qualified him for that exalted sphere, in which he was ordained to move. As God had anointed and set him apart for himself, so he presided over every part of his education, and adapted it to the designs of his providence. This is one step which God always takes, in making great men the instruments of great good.

3. God gives them the disposition, which they at any time have, to employ their superior abilities in promoting the happiness of mankind. We read, "the king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whith-

ersoever he will." And we are told, "the preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue is from the Lord." God constantly superintends great men, and guides all the motions of their hearts. He gave Cyrus his amiable disposition, as well as his great abilities. He put it into his heart to devise, adopt, and prosecute the great designs of subduing and delivering nations. And he always exercises the same supreme control over the affections, views, and pursuits of those whom he employs in executing the wise and benevolent designs of providence. Without exercising this sovereign dominion over the secret springs of action in great men, he could not justly claim the prerogative of making them his sword, his rod, his staff, or his shepherds. Great men "are not sufficient of themselves, to think any thing as of themselves; but their sufficiency is of God." He gives them that amiable disposition, which prompts them to seek the general welfare of a society, country, or nation, and which renders them the objects of general admiration, esteem, and affection. In order to do great good, great men must have the love and confidence of great numbers. Cyrus was the idol of his country, of his friends, and of his foes. By his amiable manners and friendly conduct, he captivated the hearts of high and low, and drew whole armies over to his side. This was of the Lord's doing, and absolutely necessary, to enable him to execute the designs of Heaven.

4. God gives great men the opportunity of employing all their power and influence, in executing his wise and benevolent designs. Men may possess great talents, and yet never find a proper opportunity of displaying them to the best advantage. There must be an extraordinary concurrence of circumstances, in order to give great men a proper sphere of action. It is only now and then that a scene opens to draw forth the latent energies of a great mind. In the history of the world, we find a few such scenes. There was a time, when God gave one man an opportunity of saving not only his family, but his race. This was the time of the Flood, when Noah was made the father and saviour of the world. There was a time, when whole nations were to be destroyed, to pave the way for the deliverance and prosperity of the church. That was the time of Moses, and that was the opportunity which God gave him to display all his greatness. God appointed a time to destroy the enemies of his chosen people, and strike an awe upon surrounding kingdoms. That was the time of David's glory and triumph. There was a time, when a single man had meditated and well-nigh accomplished a design of destroying the whole body of the Jews. That was the time to display the

power and virtue of Mordecai. To add no more, there was a time, when a small nation of about a hundred and twenty thousand men, were to gain the empire of the world. This amazing scene was reserved for Cyrus, and gave him an opportunity of displaying all his virtues and talents, and of transmitting the fame of both to the latest posterity. The hand of God is always concerned, not only in giving great men their talents, but also in giving them proper opportunities of exerting them in the service of their Maker and of their fellow men. Nor is this all. For,

5. It is God who succeeds their exertions for the benefit of the world. In this respect he claims a supreme control over the conduct of the greatest kings, statesmen and warriors. He claims to be the Lord of lords and the King of kings; and assumes the prerogative of giving the kingdoms of men to whomsoever he will. Abraham could not have founded a nation, unless God had been with him, and prospered him wherever he went. Joseph could not have preserved the Egyptians and his father's family from perishing by famine, had not God been with him, and succeeded his great and benevolent exertions. It was God who taught David's hands to war, and his fingers to fight; and who gave him his victories over the enemies of the church. But the divine agency appears the most conspicuous in the astonishing successes of Cyrus. To an eye of reason it must appear next to impossible that he should ever march an army to the walls of Babylon; and absolutely impossible that he should ever enter that city, which was the metropolis of the world, and which both nature and art had combined to render impregnable. But his enterprising spirit formed the great design, and God rendered his mighty efforts successful. This signal success God granted to Cyrus, on purpose to display his real divinity and absolute sovereignty over the kingdoms and nations of the earth. Such an entire superintendency over the movements of Cyrus, God expressly claims in the prediction of his victorious arms. "Thus saith the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two-leaved gates, and the gates shall not be shut. I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight: I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron. I am the Lord, and there is none else, there is no god beside me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me." It always equally depends upon God, whether great men, with all their shining talents and superior abilities, shall succeed in any of their great and important enterprises. So that in all cases, God may justly claim

the prerogative of making them the instruments of executing his own wise and benevolent designs.

The thoughts which have been suggested upon this subject are not, we trust, altogether foreign to the great occasion which has called us into the house of God at this time. We are professedly convened to pay public respect to the memory of that great man who has lately fallen in our Israel. And certainly we have just ground to lament the decease of Washington the Great. This character of right belongs to him. Great men have always been very rare in our world. Not one in a century, not one in a million of mankind has ever appeared. Though there have been many shining characters in the various learned professions, yet none of these, however acute their genius, or however extensive their learning and information, have deserved to be called great. A profession always cramps the genius, circumscribes the sphere of action, and stamps a littleness upon any human character. A great man is above learning and every learned profession. He must be an *independent citizen*, and have a full scope for the display of all his mental powers. He must be either a statesman or a warrior. In this capacity he may found, or rule, or save a nation; and thereby establish a character more durable than marble, and as lasting as the page of history. In our Washington both the statesman and the warrior were united. In the former character he held an elevated rank; but in the latter he shone without a rival, and even eclipsed the greatest captains of antiquity. God gave him a graceful figure, and a noble commanding aspect. He put him in possession of a large independent landed interest, which placed him in the first rank of citizens, inspired him with the love of liberty, created an aversion to tyranny, and effectually guarded him against the corrupting influence of places and pensions. Entirely free from the subtilties of law, the intrigues of a court, and the schemes of ambition, he lived greatly independent. In this most eligible situation he stood prepared to hear and to obey the calls of his country. Possessed of a strong and capacious mind, which was able to devise and keep its own counsels, he was fitted to stand at the head of an army and at the head of a nation, and to maintain a controlling influence in both the cabinet and the field. Such an influence, it appears from the papers that have been published, he actually did maintain, during the whole course of the American war. He first formed his army by diffusing a military spirit, and establishing military order and subordination, through the whole. He next concerted his plans of operation, and provided the means of carrying them into effect. And in order to this, he found it

necessary to superintend the grand council of the nation, and often to direct their most important measures. For a number of years Washington was the soul of America; and by his superior wisdom and weight of character, he absolutely governed thirteen professedly united but actually disunited states. In this momentous situation, while he carried in his hand the fate of more than three millions of people, he displayed the astonishing resources of his mighty mind. At one and the same time he attended to a multiplicity of great and interesting objects. While he directed the movements of all the American forces, stationed at very different and very distant posts, he kept a watchful eye over the motions of the British army, and all the manœuvres of their most skilful and famous generals. In the midst of all these weighty, and seemingly overwhelming cares and concerns, he stood alone, giving advice to all, and receiving assistance from none. There was not a man in the world capable of looking farther, or directing better, than himself. And here let us reflect with admiration and astonishment, that he never failed in a single instance, of executing his most complicated and important designs. He concerted the plan of dislodging the enemy from Boston, and he executed his purpose. He formed the scheme of surprising and capturing the Hessians at Trenton, and he actually took them by surprise. He conceived, concealed, and carried into execution, the complicated and deep design of conquering the whole British army at Yorktown. By such masterly strokes of generalship, he stands the rival of a Cyrus and a Hannibal, in those very qualities which have rendered their names immortal.

This great man, we are now to remember, God raised up in mercy to America. God gave him his great abilities, together with an opportunity and a disposition to display them in his country's service. It was God who gave him the universal love, the entire confidence, and unanimous suffrages, of his fellow citizens. God placed him at the head of our armies, and at the helm of our government. God girded his loins, directed his counsels, and succeeded his mighty efforts, through the cares of the cabinet, and the dangers of the field. Let the man be absorbed in his Maker. Let Washington the Great be loved and admired, but never adored. Our first regards are due to Him who made him the instrument of his own glory, and the founder of our national independence, and the principal promoter of our national peace, prosperity, and rising greatness.

As the goodness of God has been displayed in the life, so his awful and amiable sovereignty has been displayed in the death, of the father of our country. His life was a host. His

sword was the hope of America, and the terror of all her enemies. But the mighty man is fallen, in a day of darkness and of doubtful expectation. This great and afflictive event has spread a gloom over America, and penetrated every grateful patriotic heart in the nation. It has thrown the court, the camp, and the navy into tears. It has pierced the bosom of our illustrious President, the surviving support and glory of his country. It has, in a word, produced a more general, a more deep, and a more sincere mourning, than was ever perhaps produced by the death of any other man in the world. Jesus wept. We may weep. A nation may mourn, but never murmur nor despond. This national bereavement was designed to throw us into the hand of God, and make us feel our absolute dependence on the great first Cause. God is still able to raise up instruments to fulfil his purposes towards a people whom he has always delighted to protect, to increase, and to prosper. If we eye his hand in the gift, and submit to his will in the removal, of our late deliverer and benefactor, we may humbly hope that God will never permit us to suffer for the want of future statesmen and warriors to guide all our civil and military movements, in defence of our liberties and our lives. The death of Washington is a national trial. If to honor him, we rob God of his glory, God will be displeased, and most probably our whole nation will be punished. In the midst of our national grief, let us conduct like a people who believe the existence, and acknowledge the providence, of an infinitely holy, wise, righteous and benevolent Being. And while we pay a supreme respect to Him, let us gratefully perpetuate the memory of him, whose memory ought to be embalmed and transmitted to the latest ages of time.

By this we shall promote the honor of our nation. Though there may have been men in America whose talents were equal to Washington's, yet they never had an opportunity to display them. And though there may arise among us men hereafter, whose talents shall be equal to Washington's, yet they will never have an opportunity to display them. Washington, therefore, must necessarily be the greatest man that this quarter of the globe ever did or ever will produce. It is the genius and not the soil of a country that renders it illustrious. It is the agents in great revolutions, and not great revolutions in a nation, that render it famous. The mighty revolutions in Persia, in Greece and in Rome, had long since been lost in oblivion, had they not been attached to the immortal names of Cyrus, of Alexander and the Cæsars. So the virtues, the talents, and the mighty deeds of Washington, will do more to render the Americans famous in the annals of history, than all

the fruits of his mighty exertions. If we mean to stand high among the nations of the earth, we must perpetuate the memory of the founder of our nation.

By this we shall also transmit a bright and amiable example, for the admiration and imitation of future statesmen and warriors. There is nothing equal to examples to inspire the minds of young politicians and warriors. Alexander formed his character according to the standard of Homer's heroes. The Iliad he always carried about with him. The life and character of Washington may form thousands to shine in the cabinet and in the field. This ought to animate us to send down the current of time our illustrious Washington, with undiminished lustre and glory. And I must add, that by doing justice to Washington, we shall do honor to God. For our sakes he raised him up. For our sakes he gave him all his greatness and glory. Gratitude to God, therefore, requires us to commemorate his death, admire his character, imitate his excellences, and be watchful of his fame. His fame and ours are inseparably united, and both deserve our gratitude to Him who has made us a nation, defended our liberties, and placed us high above all other nations in civil and religious advantages. Let us, therefore, sing aright of mercy as well as judgment, and exercise that gratitude and submission which the smiles and the frowns of Heaven now loudly demand. Amen.

SERMON XI.

LAMENTATION FOR WASHINGTON.

FEBRUARY 22, 1800.

How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished!—2 SAMUEL, i. 27.

WHEN David first heard of the death of his father and of his friend, he was deeply affected, and discovered the strongest marks of unfeigned sorrow. "Then he took hold on his clothes, and rent them; and likewise all the men that were with him; and they mourned and wept until even, for Saul, and for Jonathan his son, and for the people of the Lord, and for the house of Israel." As the remains of these illustrious warriors were in the power of their enemies, David could not, as he did on a similar occasion, follow them to their graves, and weep over them there. But all that he could do, in his distressed situation, he did. Being no less expert with his pen, than with his lyre and spear, he poured forth the tender emotions of his heart in a solemn, plaintive, funeral dirge. Though he felt a warmer attachment to Jonathan than to Saul, yet in celebrating their virtues, their talents, and their public services, he pays them an equal tribute of public respect. He endeavors, with all his poetic skill, to inspire the whole nation with the same sensibilities, which he felt in his own bosom, and calls upon them, in the most pathetic strains, to unite in deploring the untimely decease of the great ornaments and benefactors of their country. "How are the mighty fallen and the weapons of war perished!" Our loss is great and irreparable. The death of our generals is the death of our hopes and the destruction of our arms. Our national calamity calls for

our national mourning, lamentation, and sorrow. These are the sentiments, which this beautiful poem was designed to inculcate. And these are the sentiments, which every people ought to feel and express, when those, who have been eminently useful in life, are laid in the dust.

To describe men of eminence, and to show the propriety of lamenting their death, will be the business of the ensuing discourse.

No man was made merely for himself, but all men for the service of each other. Usefulness, therefore, does not so much consist in seeking our private, personal happiness, as in promoting the general welfare of all with whom we are any way concerned. Though most men are capable of doing something for others as well as for themselves; yet only a few individuals possess either talents, opportunities, or inclinations, to become extensively useful. And among these there are so many degrees of merit, that it is extremely difficult to determine the precise point where mediocrity ends, and eminence begins. It is easy, however, to give a general description of those, in various departments of life, whose uncommon exertions for the public good justly place them in the noble rank of eminent men.

Since the general good of society requires particular persons to devote themselves to particular employments, any individual of a superior genius and of an enterprising spirit may become eminently useful in any lawful profession. The theoretical farmer, who spares no labor nor expense in trying experiments, and in discovering the easiest and best modes of cultivating the earth, is an eminent citizen. The man who pursues the business of commerce upon the broad basis of general utility, promotes the public good as well as his own, and is extensively useful to his country. The man who, by close application and critical observation, makes advances in the healing art, and employs his superior skill in relieving the pains and maladies of his fellow men, is a great public blessing. The man of genius and integrity, who is profoundly learned in the law, and who exerts all his abilities in promoting the cause of justice, and defending the rights of his fellow citizens, does honor to his profession, and contributes largely to the general good of civil society. In a word, every one of a public spirit and superior talents, who makes it his supreme object, in his private employment, to promote the public happiness, is an eminently useful man.

There is a higher class of eminent men, who move in the higher walks of life. These, instead of seeking merely the honors and emoluments of office, have so much greatness of

mind and goodness of heart, as to employ their public and important stations, as the means of more public and extensive usefulness. On this eminent list, we ought to place all those who shine with a peculiar lustre, either in the seats of learning, or in the courts of justice, or in the councils of state, or in the supreme command of fleets and armies.

But there are some who rise higher still on the scale of usefulness. I mean those, who extend their views beyond the limits of their own nation or country, and exert their influence to promote the general good of all mankind. There are a few individuals, among the many millions of our race, who have heads and hearts equal to such a great, extensive, and benevolent design. It must be allowed by all, that the inventors of useful arts and sciences, the founders of civil, religious, and literary institutions, and the deliverers of nations and kingdoms from slavery and ruin, are the most illustrious and eminently useful men in the world. The happy effects of their great and noble exertions, will continue and increase to the remotest periods of time.

When such eminently great and useful men are removed from the stage of life, their removal is a public calamity, which calls for public mourning and sorrow. All nations have felt the propriety of lamenting the loss of those who have been eminently useful in life, and of paying them peculiar honors at death. This appears from the practice of the Egyptians, Greeks and Romans, and especially from the funeral rites of the Jews, at the decease and interment of their eminent judges, generals, kings, priests, prophets, and patriarchs. When the pious patriarch Jacob died in Egypt, his death was publicly lamented by a most solemn and splendid funeral. His body being embalmed, the Egyptians mourned for him threescore and ten days. And after this, we are told, "Joseph went up to bury his father; and with him went up all the servants of Pharaoh, the elders of his house, and all the elders of the land of Egypt. And all the house of Joseph, and his brethren, and his father's house. And there went up with him both chariots and horsemen: and it was a very great company. And they came to the threshing-floor of Atad, which is beyond Jordan, and there they mourned with a great and very sore lamentation: and he made a mourning for his father seven days. And when the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites, saw the mourning in the floor of Atad, they said, This is a grievous mourning to the Egyptians." The decease of Aaron on his journey to Canaan was deeply regretted. "When all the congregation saw that Aaron was dead, they mourned for Aaron thirty days, even all the house of Israel." Though Moses, the servant of

the Lord and king in Jeshurun, died, and was buried in private; yet his death was publicly and universally lamented. It is recorded to his honor, that "the children of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days: so the days of weeping and mourning for Moses were ended." Samuel was an eminent prophet and judge in Israel, and his death was deplored as a national loss. We read, "All the Israelites were gathered together, and lamented him, and buried him in his house at Ramah." Our text and context contain the lamentation, occasioned by the premature and sudden death of Saul and Jonathan. In a few chapters forward, we find a particular account of the funeral honors paid to an eminent general, who fell by the hand of an assassin. "And David said to Joab, and to all the people that were with him, Rend your clothes and gird you with sackcloth, and mourn before Abner. And King David himself followed the bier. And they buried Abner in Hebron: and the king lifted up his voice and wept at the grave of Abner; and all the people wept. And the king said unto his servants, Know ye not that there is a prince and a great man fallen this day in Israel?" Of Jehoiada the priest we read, that "he waxed old, and was full of days when he died. And they buried him in the city of David, among the kings, because he had done good in Israel, both toward God and toward his house." It is recorded of Hezekiah, that pious prince and eminent reformer, that "he slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the chiefest of the sepulchres of the sons of David. And all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem did him honor at his death." The same religious people more deeply lamented the untimely death of Josiah, and paid a more public and lasting respect to his memory. The account of his death and of their conduct is very striking. "And the archers shot at king Josiah, and the king said to his servants, Have me away; for I am sore wounded. His servants therefore took him out of that chariot and put him into the second chariot that he had; and they brought him to Jerusalem, and he died, and was buried in one of the sepulchres of his fathers. And all Judah and Jerusalem mourned for Josiah; and the singing-men and singing-women spake of Josiah in their lamentations to this day; and made them an ordinance in Israel." Though God often reproved his ancient people for paying religious homage to the idols of the heathen; yet we never find that he reproved them for paying funeral honors to departed men of superior merit, among their own nation. Their example in this respect therefore, seems to have a divine sanction; and plainly teaches us the propriety of lamenting the death and commemorating the virtues of those who have been eminently useful in life.

But the propriety of this may be still farther illustrated. Here then permit me to observe,

1. The death of eminent men never fails to diminish the glory of a people. Such illustrious characters are the ornaments of human nature, and of the nation to which they belong. Multitudes, whom God has endowed with noble talents, and favored with peculiar opportunities of doing good, either bury or abuse their intellectual powers, and become a reproach to their country as well as to their race. But those do honor to their nature and to their nation, who display superior abilities by a series of great and noble actions. A few such illustrious characters will render a nation respectable in the eyes of all the world. The Grecians were never very rich, nor very numerous, and yet there never was a more renowned nation on earth, Their eminent men have commanded the respect and admiration of all succeeding ages. Great and good characters are a greater glory to any nation, than all their wealth and numbers. Whenever, therefore, their greatest and best men are removed by death, their glory departs, and they necessarily sink in the view of surrounding nations. This seems to have been the first idea which struck the mind of David, in composing his mournful elegy on the death of Saul and Jonathan. "The beauty of Israel is slain upon the high places." As their lives had increased, so their death diminished, the glory of their nation. And any people have reason to lament the loss of their glory when they are bereaved of the fathers and friends of their country.

2. The death of eminent men not only diminishes the glory, but weakens the strength, of a people. Wisdom is better than weapons of war. The strength of a nation lies in the heads and hearts of those who have the care and direction of the national concerns. A people may possess a very rich soil, a very extensive country, and very ample resources of wealth, and yet be extremely weak and defenceless, merely for the want of able men to preside in their councils and to lead in their armies. This was frequently the case in the Jewish nation. In the time of Joshua they were strong, and struck terror into all their enemies; but after his decease, though they increased in numbers, yet they declined in strength, and became an easy prey to every people who had courage enough to invade their country. In the days of David they were again universally respected and revered; but in succeeding ages the want of wise and valiant men exposed them to poverty, meanness, and slavery. The strength of the most powerful nations has often been suspended upon the exertions of a single warrior or statesman. Alexander raised the Grecians to the empire of the

world, and that empire was suspended upon his life; for his death divided and dissolved his extensive dominions. Though it is not very commonly the case that a single person is the sole support of a people, yet the death of one who sways either the sceptre or the sword, never fails to give a great national shock, and to weaken either the civil or the military strength of the kingdom. David was deeply impressed with this painful thought, while deploring the death of those who fell in the defence of their country. "How are the mighty fallen!" He repeats the sad reflection. "How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished!" What avail all our numbers, all our fortresses, and all our national resources, after our mighty men of valor, wisdom, and experience, are laid in the dust! The same sentiment he expressed with greater sensibility on the death of Abner. "I am this day weak, though anointed king." A nation often sustains a greater loss by the death of an able general, than by the defeat of a numerous army. For it is much easier to recruit a numerous army than to replace a renowned general. No men have been more sincerely and universally lamented than those brave and mighty generals who have fallen in the field of battle, and by their death depressed the hearts and weakened the hands of a whole nation. A people therefore can never have a greater cause for public mourning and lamentation than the loss of noble patriots and warriors, who have been the strength and protection as well as ornaments of their country. I may add,

3. The removal of wise, virtuous, and valuable men from a people is not only a distressing but an alarming dispensation of divine providence. It indicates that God is about to bring a train of heavy judgments upon them, for their ingratitude and abuse of public blessings. He often took away from the house of Israel their greatest and best men, as a prelude to a series of national calamities. This appears from his express declaration by the mouth of the prophet Isaiah. "Behold, the Lord, the Lord of hosts, doth take away from Jerusalem and from Judah the mighty man, the man of war, the judge, and the prophet, and the prudent, and the ancient, the captain of fifty, and the honorable man, and the counsellor, and the cunning artificer, and the eloquent orator." This was a heavy calamity in itself, and a presage of impending judgments. For it is added, "And I will give children to be their princes, and babes shall rule over them, and the people shall be oppressed." We often find a train of evils following the death of great and good men in Israel. After the death of Joshua and of the elders that outlived him, the people fell into licentiousness, anarchy, and confusion, from which they never recovered until

the days of David. Solomon was a prince of peace, and raised the nation to the summit of earthly glory; but his death divided the kingdom, and threw the twelve tribes into all the horrors and miseries of civil war, the fatal consequences of which remain to this day. When a pillar of the state is taken away, it never fails to weaken or unsettle the whole frame of government. While the celebrated Pitt guided the national councils of Britain, success crowned all her enterprises; but as soon as he ceased to breathe and to speak, her councils were distracted, her schemes were blasted, and she sustained a loss which will never be repaired. It has often happened in the course of human affairs, that a kingdom has fallen by the death of a single statesman or warrior. And it ought to be remembered, that what has been may be again. God severely frowns upon a people when he takes away their great and useful men; and at the same time threatens them with still farther tokens of his awful displeasure. This shows the duty as well as the propriety of their going into mourning, under the bereaving hand of his providence, which has laid those in the dust who once gave energy to their government, and victory and triumph to their arms.

You will now, my hearers, spontaneously conclude, that we have great reason to deplore the late death of General Washington, as a severe frown of Heaven upon our rising nation. He was unquestionably the most useful as well as most illustrious man of the present age. He early entered upon the theatre of public life, and spent near fifty years in the service of his country. In such a long course of time, the important stations which he filled, and the trying scenes through which he passed, gave him ample opportunities of performing the most signal deeds of valor, of wisdom, and of patriotism. Though our nation has produced many eminent men in the civil and military departments, as well as in every learned and unlearned profession; yet America never produced any other man who has been so eminently and extensively useful to his country and to the world, as Washington the Great. It is hard to say whether the strength of his mind was superior to the ardor of his patriotism; or whether this was superior to his success in his country's service. In the military department he undoubtedly intended to save his nation from the sword of their enemies; and here he was completely succeeded. In the civil department he undoubtedly intended to save his nation from anarchy and confusion; and here he was also completely succeeded. In every situation, whether in the field or in the cabinet, or in his beloved seat at Mount Vernon, he always had it in his heart, to sacrifice his personal interest to the

national happiness. This he discovered by the repeated and astonishing instances of his disinterested conduct. Though he jeoparded his life in the high places of the field, purely to defend the lives and liberties and fortunes of his countrymen, yet he would never accept of any pecuniary rewards for his military exertions, which it was in their wishes or power to bestow. Though he took the reins of government into his hands, in mere condescension to the unanimous voice of the nation, yet he utterly refused to receive the legal emoluments of his arduous office. And though, after his retirement from public life, the people once more testified their high estimation of his personal merit, by offering him a gratuity for his great and noble services, yet his patriotic heart would not permit him to accept it, on any other condition than that of devoting it wholly to public and beneficent uses. How many men of distinction in the late American war had the courage to perform noble and heroic deeds, and yet at the same time had the meanness to make their private fortunes by defrauding the public! And how many famous statesmen and heroes, in other nations, have first gained the applause of their country, and then merited the execration of the world for their mean and mercenary motives! But it is the peculiar glory of Washington that his character will admit of no deduction. He never deserted, he never defrauded, he never oppressed, the people whom he defended in war and governed in peace. Instead of putting his money, he put his character, at interest. The noble patriotic spirit which he uniformly displayed, spread a glory over all his public conduct, and had a greater influence than all his wisdom and valor, in uniting America and the world in his favor. His love to his country effectually secured his country's love, which placed him in those eminent stations in which he performed such preëminent services, as will embalm his memory, and perpetuate his fame to the latest generations.

But alas! amidst all his glory and usefulness, God has been pleased to remove him not only from our sight, but from our help. "How is the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished!" The glory of our nation is departed. We have lost a large share of respectability in the eyes of Britain, in the eyes of France, and in the eyes of every nation to which our flag has wafted the fame of Washington. Distant nations have heretofore formed their opinions of America from the great and amiable character of him who defeated our enemies, and put us in possession of the most perfect freedom and independence. Whether, therefore, they are friendly or unfriendly to our growing country, they cannot view us in that exalted

light, in which they were constrained to view us, while we justly claimed as our own, the greatest patriot, the greatest general, the greatest man, in the world.

But our national strength, no less than our national glory, is diminished. How are the weapons of war perished in the perishing hand of Washington! Whilst he lived to direct and animate our little band of warriors, they virtually possessed all the martial spirit and strength of the United States. His single voice could call as many fighting men into the field to their assistance as the most pressing exigences of the times could demand. This our foreign enemies believed, and kept their distance. This our internal enemies knew, and remained in silence and despair. But God has seen fit to take from us the mighty man and man of war, who was the ornament and defence of our country, at a most critical time, when the world are in arms, and every nation seems to be spreading misery and destruction to the utmost of their power. Though the armies of Europe have not invaded our country, yet the courts of Europe have employed all their political arts to embarrass our government, divide our councils, and draw us into their destructive contentions. And how far they have succeeded, the melancholy event which we this day deplore, may serve to discover. The death of our renowned chief may encourage, unite, and strengthen, all our national enemies. How far it may affect our present embassy to France, and the present opposition to the administration of government, we cannot determine, though we have certainly much to fear. The decease of the Friend and Father of our country would have been at any time a public calamity; but at this dark and distressing day, it is a peculiar frown of Heaven. God is now, therefore, loudly calling us to humiliation and mourning. And though we may say and do too much, yet there is the utmost danger of our feeling too little under his correcting hand. The plain and solemn language of his providence is, "Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help. His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish." Washington is no more, with respect to us; and it will be gross idolatry still to confide in his tomb, or to depend upon any influence of his in our favor, in the world of spirits. His removal at this peculiar time, we have reason to believe, was designed as a solemn admonition to America, to renounce an undue dependence on an arm of flesh, and to place their supreme confidence in the Lord Jehovah, in whom there is everlasting strength. And what could have been better calculated to produce this desirable effect? Is Washington dead? His successor in command may die.

Is Washington dead? The President may die. Is Washington dead? The wisest and best man in any department may die, and disappoint the hopes of the court, of the army, of the navy, of all his fellow citizens. Death has lately made breach after breach in the congregation of the mighty. How many men of eminent wisdom, integrity, and patriotism, who were the bulwarks of our land, have been followed to their tombs, by their weeping countrymen, in the course of a very few months! "Cease ye therefore from man, whose breath is in his nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of?"

God seems to be coming out against us in the way of judgment; and it nearly concerns all ranks and orders of men, to prepare to meet him in the alarming dispensations of his providence. By the death we are deploring, he is reading a solemn leeture on the vanity and frailty of life, and teaching every one the absurdity, as well as criminality, of relying on any inherent quality or outward circumstance, to shield him from the stroke of death. Let not the strong man trust in his strength; for Washington the mighty is dead. Let not the rich man trust in his wealth; for Washington the wealthy is dead. Let not the great man trust in his greatness; for Washington the great is dead. Let not the benevolent man trust in his benevolence and usefulness; for Washington, the father of his country and the friend of man, is dead. This solemn instance of mortality, which has now assembled the whole nation in the houses of God, and dressed all classes of citizens in the garments of mourning, loudly calls them to consider, that "they are this day going the way of all the earth." The time cannot be far distant, when they must all descend to the grave, stripped of their wealth, of their ornaments, and of all their earthly distinctions, and lie as low in the dust, as the man they lament.

But while we are contemplating the tomb of Washington, and deploring the day of his death, let us not forget to rejoice at the day of his birth. That day was a signal mercy to America, which ought to be had in grateful and perpetual remembrance. He was born neither too early, nor too late, for his own glory or the public good. He came upon the stage of life, at the very time when the widest field of usefulness was opened before him. He entered into that field, and spent his days in performing the most illustrious and essential services for his native country. For these, we justly owe him a large debt of public gratitude and respect, which is the only proper and adequate reward of eminent virtue and public usefulness. We can easily calculate the value of that time or strength, which is employed for our personal benefit; but who can fully estimate the worth of those eminent virtues and talents, which are displayed in eminent services for the public good? The

path to every species of eminence is extremely steep and difficult. No man ever arrived at extraordinary usefulness, without extraordinary exertions. It is as hard to comprehend the cares, the perils, the self-denying and arduous labors, of those who guide the movements of armies, or direct the councils of state; as it is to estimate the great and numerous benefits, which may accrue to a nation, to a country, or to the world, in the course of ages, from their great and noble efforts. Nothing therefore can fully discharge our strong and endearing obligations to the father and defender of our country, but the most grateful emotions of heart, and the most durable monuments of public respect. Let these be erected, and sacredly preserved, as long as the name of Americans shall be known in the earth. But while we are faithful to the fame of our illustrious benefactor, let us be wise to appreciate his great and amiable example, which is really more valuable to each of his countrymen, than all his legacies bequeathed to his friends. There is something in his illustrious life, which comes home to the business and bosom of every person, whether he acts in a public or private capacity. Let those who manage the affairs of government, imitate his wisdom, integrity, patriotism, and invincible firmness. Let those who command in the field, imitate his courage, fortitude, prudence, patience, secrecy, and self-possession. Let those who live in wealth and affluence, imitate his private charity and public beneficence. Let those who are fond of splendor and parade, admire his republican virtues, and imitate his sublime simplicity of manners. Let the wealthy and independent farmer follow his example of economy, industry, and perseverance in business. Let the aged imitate his decent gravity and perfect equanimity. Let the young despise the vanities which he despised; avoid the vices which he avoided; and practice those sober and manly virtues which he practiced, in the morning of his days. In a word, let all classes and descriptions of men imitate that moderation, that public spirit, and that tender concern for the good of all mankind, which he so eminently displayed in every part of his private and public life. Whoever wishes to be eminently useful in any private employment or public station, let him think, and act, and live, like Washington. He never lost any time. He never pursued any trifles. He never neglected any advantages. He never buried any talents. He never lived for himself, but for the universal benefit of his fellow men. This commanded their love and admiration, while he lived; and this throws them into mourning and sorrow at his death. How beautiful is such an example! how worthy of universal imitation! Whoever follows it shall live universally beloved, and die universally lamented. Amen.

SERMON XII.

GOD NEVER FORSAKES HIS PEOPLE.

ANNUAL THANKSGIVING, NOVEMBER 27, 1800.

For the Lord will not forsake his people, for his great name's sake: because it hath pleased the Lord to make you his people. — 1 Samuel, xii. 22.

The children of Israel, having long experienced the evils of anarchy and confusion, earnestly requested Samuel to make them a king. Though this request was displeasing to God as well as to Samuel, yet God directed Samuel to anoint Saul to reign over his people. At this critical juncture of public affairs, Nahash the Ammonite came with an army into Judea, and encamped against Jabesh-Gilead. The inhabitants of the city were willing at first to capitulate upon reasonable terms; but Nahash insisted on the hard condition, that they should tamely suffer him to pluck out all their right eyes, "and lay it for a reproach upon all Israel." This inhuman proposal the elders of Jabesh rejected with proper disdain, and demanded a truce for seven days. In that interval they sent to Saul for immediate assistance, who in a high tone of authority commanded all the fighting men in the kingdom to appear in the field. They readily obeyed the mandate of their new sovereign, and came with one consent, to the amount of three hundred and thirty thousand. At the head of this numerous host Saul attacked and completely destroyed the whole army of the Ammonites. While this signal victory was spreading joy through all Judea, Samuel invited the tribes of Israel to repair to Gilgal and renew the kingdom there. Accordingly we are told, "All the people went to Gilgal, and there they made Saul king before the Lord in Gilgal: and there they sac-

rificed sacrifices of peace-offerings before the Lord: and there Saul and all the men of Israel rejoieed greatly." Many individuals however felt very differently on that occasion, and especially Samuel, who knew the character of Saul, and was apprized of the evils which the nation would suffer during his unhappy reign. Accordingly he took that favorable opportunity to resign all his civil offices, which he had long and faithfully discharged; to make some just observations on the late revolution of government; and to remind the people of the great things which God had done for them, and which, he tells them in the text, gave them just ground of hope and confidence in their present critical situation. "The Lord will not forsake his people, for his great name's sake: because it hath pleased the Lord to make you his people." This was a natural and just way of reasoning. Samuel had a right to conclude from the perfection of the divine character, that God would, by a wise and consistent course of conduct, eventually answer the ends he proposed, in making the children of Israel his peculiar people. And the same mode of reasoning is still equally just and conclusive. As far as God has been pleased to make any nation his peculiar people, so far that people have reason to expect that he will not forsake them. Hence the spirit of the text suggests this general observation:

That since God has been pleased to make our nation his peculiar people, he will not forsake us.

In illustrating this subject, it is necessary to consider how God has made us his peculiar people, and what grounds we have to hope that he will not forsake us.

I. Let us consider how God has made our nation his peculiar people.

Here it may be proper to premise, that God has never taken us into a federal relation to himself, as he did the children of Israel. He made a public and mutual compact with them, in which he avouched them to be his people, and they avouched him to be their God. But though God never entered into such a national covenant with us or with our fathers, yet he has been pleased in various other ways to make us his peculiar people.

1. It hath pleased the Lord to separate us in a peculiar manner from other nations. It was by such a separation that he made the seed of Abraham his peculiar people. "I am the Lord your God, which have separated you from other people." This circumstance Solomon pleads in their favor, while interceding for them before God, at the dedication of the temple. "Thou didst separate them from among all the people of the earth, to be thine inheritance, as thou spakest by the hand of

Moses thy servant, when thou broughtest our fathers out of Egypt." And Moses makes use of the same circumstance to enforce their obedience to the divine commands. "Or hath God essayed to go, and to take him a nation from the midst of another nation, by temptations, by signs, and by wonders, and by war, and by a mighty hand, and by a stretched-out arm, and by great terrors, according to all that the Lord your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes?" Here we may discover a very great analogy between our separation and that of the Israelites. Were they taken from the midst of another nation? So were we. Were they planted in the midst of a barbarous and idolatrous people? So were we. Were they conducted to the place of their destination by extraordinary interpositions of providence? So were we. Did they become a peculiar people by their peculiar separation from other nations? So did we. God's taking our fathers from their native country, and bringing them a thousand leagues across the mighty ocean to this then dreary wilderness, was practically setting them apart for himself, and making them his peculiar people.

2. It hath pleased the Lord to make us the objects of his peculiar care and protection. Thus he distinguished his ancient chosen people. While he fixed his heart and eye upon them, he spread over them the broad wing of his providence. Of this we have a beautiful description in the thirty-second chapter of Deuteronomy. "The Lord's portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance. He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; he led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye. As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings; so the Lord alone did lead them, and there was no strange god with him. He made him ride on the high places of the earth, that he might eat of the increase of the fields; and he made him suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock." God displayed the wonders of his goodness to his people, not only while they were in Egypt, at the Red Sea, and in the wilderness, but all the while they remained in the land of promise. They were planted in the midst of the nations, and surrounded by enemies far and near. The Egyptians and Chaldeans were their distant enemies, while the residue of the Canaanites remained "as pricks in their eyes and thorns in their sides." But God graciously guarded them on every hand, by both a visible and invisible providence; and made it appear to the world that they were his peculiar people. Hence Balaam, who was employed to curse them, was constrained to say,

"How shall I curse whom God hath not cursed? or how shall I defy whom the Lord hath not defied? For from the top of the rocks I see him, and from the hills I behold him: lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations. Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel." Though no proper miracles were wrought in favor of our fathers, yet God afforded them, as he did the Israelites, his peculiar presence and protection. He caused their enemies, at first, to flee before them; and afterwards, when they stood in perishing need of their help, he put it into their hearts to supply their wants. He sent, from time to time, the pestilence and the sword among the natives, by which they were gradually diminished, and effectually restrained from doing mischief. While, on the other hand, he caused our fathers, who were a few individuals, to spread far and wide, and multiply into a great and powerful people, and at length to become a free and independent nation, notwithstanding all attempts to destroy them. By such a series of signal interpositions in our favor, God has visibly owned us, and marked us for himself, in the view of surrounding nations. It must be added,

3. The Lord has been pleased to form us for his peculiar service, by making us, from the beginning, a *religious* people. The Israelites were more eminently the people of God on account of religion, than on any other account; yea, in that respect, they were the only people of God in the world. They were separated from the rest of mankind, for the great purpose of preserving and propagating the true religion, in opposition to the attempts of all other nations, to spread superstition and idolatry over the face of the earth. Hence God told them by the mouth of Moses, "Thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God, and the Lord hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself, above all the nations that are upon the earth." And again he said by Jeremiah, that "he had planted them a noble vine, wholly a right seed." Their ancestors, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, were eminently holy, and prepared the way for the continuance and prevalence of vital piety among their distant posterity, until they were formed into a religious nation, and furnished with peculiar means of grace. "Behold," says Moses, "I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the Lord my God commanded me, that ye should do so in the land whither ye go to possess it: Keep therefore and do them: for this is your wisdom and understanding in the sight of the nations which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people. For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh them as the

Lord our God is, in all things that we call upon him for? And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day?" Thus God formed his ancient peculiar people of religious characters and for a religious purpose. And did he not form our nation of similar characters, and for a similar purpose? Did not our fathers resemble the ancient patriarchs in sincere and fervent piety? Did they not leave their native country, and sacrifice their dearest temporal interests, for the sake of enjoying and promoting real religion in this dark corner of the earth? Did not the spirit and principles of religion govern them in their public as well as private transactions? Did they not make ample provision for maintaining the public worship of God among themselves? Did they not use all the means in their power to civilize and christianize the native savages? Did they not lay broad and permanent foundations for the promotion of religion and the diffusion of christian knowledge to the latest generations? In a word, was not our nation formed for religious purposes, founded on religious principles, and highly distinguished by religious advantages? And in this way did not God visibly set us apart as his own peculiar people? If we trace the uniform conduct of God towards us, from the day our forefathers landed on these inhospitable shores to the present moment, it will appear that he has done more to raise us up, to preserve and deliver us, to make us holy and happy, and to fit us for his service in building up his kingdom, than he has done for any other nation since the christian era. And notwithstanding our present degeneracy in morals and religion, we even now appear in the eyes of all the world, as God's peculiar and favorite people. I proceed as proposed,

II. To show what ground we have to hope that God will not forsake us.

It appears from the preceding observations, that he has done a great deal to form us for himself. He separated the founders of our nation from their friends and from their country. He carried them through the dangers of the sea, and planted them here in a howling wilderness. He protected them amidst savage foes, and guarded them against foreign enemies. He granted them great and peculiar religious advantages. He enlarged their borders, increased their numbers, and caused them to grow up into a large and wealthy people. He carried them through a long and dangerous war, and finally made them a free, separate, independent nation. For almost two centuries he has been forming and owning us as his peculiar people. And does not this give us ground to hope that he will not

forsake us? Can we suppose that he would spend so much time and employ so many means to make us his peculiar people, without some wise and weighty reasons? And whatever those reasons were, can we suppose that they will permit him to forsake us until he has completely answered his purposes? We may safely reason in the language of the text, "The Lord will not forsake us, for his great name's sake: because it hath pleased the Lord to make us his people." Here, then, to give this argument its full force, I would observe,

1. God will not forsake us because he loved and respected our fathers. His peculiar regard to them was one motive for making us his peculiar people. He selected and distinguished Israel for the sake of their pious and amiable ancestors. This Moses endeavored to impress upon their minds. "The Lord did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: But because the Lord loved you, and because he would keep the oath he had sworn to your fathers, hath the Lord brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bond-men, from the hand of Pharaoh, king of Egypt." Again he says, "Only the Lord had a delight in your fathers to love them, and he chose their seed after them, even you above all people, as it is this day." There is reason to believe that the Lord loved the fathers of our nation as really, if not so ardently, as he loved the ancient patriarchs. Like them, they felt and acted as pilgrims and strangers on the earth; and while they sought this country, they more earnestly sought a better, that is, an heavenly. They were men of extraordinary piety and devotion, and made religion their main business. They called upon God in season, and out of season, and presented ten thousand petitions to the throne of divine grace, for their nearest and remotest posterity. As the effectual, fervent prayers of such righteous men must have been pleasing to God, so they give us ground to hope that he will long remember our land, and not forsake the children of those whom he delighted to love.

2. We are encouraged to hope that God will not forsake us, because he loves the pious posterity of our pious ancestors. God often spared the whole Jewish nation for the sake of those pious individuals who remained heartily attached to his cause and his interest. Isaiah says, "Except the Lord of hosts had left us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah." Though the body of the nation often fell into great declensions, yet there was always a number of Israelites indeed, who were sincere

and zealous friends to religion. These God graciously regarded, and for their sakes often averted or removed desolating judgments. We find several shining characters expressly mentioned, who were powerful and prevailing intercessors for a degenerate people. "Moses and Aaron among his priests, and Samuel among them that call upon his name: they called upon the Lord and he answered them." If God was pleased to spare his ancient people for the sake of eminent saints, why will he not spare our guilty nation for the sake of men of the same excellent character? Notwithstanding our great degeneracy, there are undoubtedly many thousands of sincere friends to God in our land, who are heartily engaged to maintain not only the form, but the power and spirit of religion. These are, at present, the ornaments of our churches and the defence of our country. And as long as a succession of these godly men shall remain, we have reason to hope that the Lord will spare us from national ruin.

3. We may confidently hope not to be forsaken by God, because he may still answer very important purposes, by preserving and treating us as his peculiar people. One end may be, to make it appear to the world that he is able to protect a nation whom he has set apart for himself, against their most powerful and subtile enemies. His ancient peculiar people were exposed to peculiar opposition. All nations were their enemies, and in their turn attempted to destroy them. Hence his own glory required him to show himself strong in their behalf, and bear them as on eagles' wings above the united opposition of all their enemies. This, Samuel suggests in the text. "The Lord will not forsake his people, for his great name's sake." Moses makes use of the same argument to prevail upon God not to treat them according to their desert, and entirely cut them off. "Now if thou shalt kill all this people as one man, then the nations which have heard the fame of thee, will speak, saying, Because the Lord was not able to bring this people into the land which he sware unto them, therefore he hath slain them in the wilderness." And Joshua pleads that God would not, for his own sake, suffer the enemies of Israel to destroy them. "O Lord, what shall I say, when Israel turneth their back before their enemies? For the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land shall hear of it and shall environ us round, and cut off our name from the earth: and what wilt thou do unto thy great name?" The glory of God was deeply concerned to preserve the seed of Abraham, whom he had been pleased to make his people. And since he has been pleased to distinguish us in a similar manner, his own glory is now concerned to protect us amidst

the tumults and revolutions of contending nations. He can, and we have reason to hope he will, display the glory of his great name, in holding us up in the view of the world, as the objects of his peculiar care and protection.

But there is another important end which God may answer, by continuing us his peculiar people; and that is, to maintain the true religion in the world, whilst it is visibly expiring among all other nations. God was pleased to preserve the Jews two thousand years, for the purpose of maintaining the true religion, amidst the errors and corruptions which had overspread the world. During that long period of darkness, they were the only people on earth, who retained the true worship of God, and safely preserved the sacred books of divine inspiration. Had they been destroyed before the Messiah came, the light of divine truth might have been totally extinguished. So unless it please God to continue us his peculiar people, it seems that the light of the gospel and the means of religion may be, in a few years, entirely lost. Pagan idolatry and Mohammedan superstition have long excluded christianity from Asia and Africa. Atheism, deism, and every species of infidelity are rapidly prevailing in Europe, and involving the most enlightened nations in all the horrors of moral darkness. America therefore seems to be the only place where the church can live, and religion maintain its ground. Here the laws of the land, as well as the education and habits of the people, are in favor of christianity. Here religious societies and congregations generally enjoy the ordinances of the gospel and the means of grace. Here there seems to be nothing to obstruct the prevalence of religion but the native corruption of the human heart. This God can remove at his pleasure, by pouring out his Spirit upon us, as he did from time to time upon his ancient peculiar people. We are, in every view, better situated, better qualified, and better disposed, than any other nation in the world, to preserve and propagate the pure religion of Christ. This is certainly a very important end to be answered by our preservation. And as long as God can promote his own glory and the interests of his kingdom, by our instrumentality, we may safely conclude he will not give us up to national ruin. Or, to use the language of the text, we have good ground to hope "the Lord will not forsake us, for his great name's sake: because it hath pleased the Lord to make us his people."

Let me now apply this leading sentiment agreeably to the design of the day, and the present state of our religion and government.

1. If God will continue to own us as his peculiar people,

then we may confide in his wisdom and goodness, to defeat the designs of those, who attempt to destroy our national peace and prosperity. We are greatly exposed to foes without and to foes within. The European nations are fiercely engaged in war, and seem determined to draw us into their fatal contentions. They have for years been using every political art and intrigue, to undermine our religion and government. And though their designs have been detected and opposed, yet they have succeeded so far as to poison our sentiments, to distract our councils, to injure our commerce, and to diminish the strength of the nation. These evils, great in themselves, are greatly enhanced by our present state of doubtful expectation, whether a professed infidel, or a professed christian, will be raised to the first seat of our general government. But if the God of our fathers be our God, then we may justly expect, that he will in due time dissipate the dark clouds which are gathering over us, and prevent the ruin with which we are threatened. He can and will protect his own people against the united opposition of the whole world. He has the hearts, and tongues, and pens of our enemies in his power, and can either mediately or immediately counteract all their malignant effects. He can open our eyes to see the danger of civil and religious delusions, and cause us to pursue our true interests, in opposition to all foreign influence. In such a divine protector we may safely confide. But we have no ground to trust in ourselves, for abundant evidence has been exhibited in the course of a few years, that we are as liable to imbibe infidelity, and atheism, and to run into anarchy and confusion, as the nations of Europe. If God should forsake us, we should soon be destroyed by others, or destroy ourselves. But yet we have great encouragement to hope, that while he is making a full end of other nations, he will not make a full end of us, because he has been pleased to make us his people.

2. If God will not forsake us, then he will enlarge us, and make us an exceedingly great and flourishing nation. He made his ancient people extremely numerous, rich, and powerful. Agreeably to his promise, he set them at the head of all other nations, who dreaded their power, courted their favor, revered their laws and religion, and were astonished at their superior prosperity and happiness. And if God will not forsake our nation, but only treat us in time to come as he has done in times past, we shall soon rise superior to every other kingdom on earth in numbers, in wealth, in strength, and in every thing that human power and art can effect. If our present enterprising spirit continues to operate, and the smiles of Heaven continue to attend our vigorous exertions, we shall in a

very short time have the possession and dominion of this whole western world. It seems to be the design of Providence to diminish other nations, and to increase and strengthen ours. The nations of Europe are destroying one another by millions year after year; and though they may cease hostilities for a season, yet there is no prospect of their establishing permanent peace. Their corrupt sentiments in religion and morals, and their disorganizing principles in politics, will naturally increase their discords and contentions, and gradually prepare them for final ruin. One war after another will probably "gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty." Hence there is great reason to believe that God is about to transfer the empire of the world from Europe to America, where he has planted his peculiar people. And should this be the design of Heaven, we shall undoubtedly continue to spread and increase until we become the most numerous and powerful nation on earth.

3. If God will not forsake us, but own us as his peculiar people, then it is to be expected that he will take effectual care to maintain the cause of religion among us. This will be necessary to promote our prosperity, and to prepare us to answer his chief design in making us his peculiar people. The cause of religion is now in a languishing state. The number is small who publicly appear on the Lord's side, and the number is still smaller who are warmly attached to the interests of his kingdom. The worship of God in public and in private is much neglected. The holy Sabbath is openly abused and boldly profaned. The important doctrines of the gospel are greatly disrelished, disputed, and opposed. Atheism, deism, infidelity, and every species of moral corruption, are pouring in upon us from every quarter. All these causes are unitedly operating to extinguish the light of divine truth, and to throw us into more than pagan darkness. But if God means to acknowledge us as his peculiar people, he will maintain and revive his sinking cause among us. He treated his peculiar people of old in this manner. They were often corrupted in their religion and morals by corrupt and idolatrous nations. But as long as he visibly owned them, he took effectual care to reclaim them time after time from their deep declensions. He raised up pious prophets and priests to warn them of their danger and instruct them in duty. He raised up pious princes to cut down their groves and destroy their idols. And he poured out his Spirit to bring them to the love and practice of the true religion. God is still able to maintain his own cause among his own people. He can raise up rulers who shall cordially embrace the gospel, and effectually protect our churches

in the full enjoyment of all their religious privileges. He can put it into the hearts of ministers to preach the gospel in all its purity and simplicity, and faithfully discharge all the duties of their sacred office. And he can pour out his Spirit upon atheists, deists, infidels, and all classes of sinners; and make them the instruments of promoting the cause which they wish to destroy. These are means which he has employed to preserve us from total apostacy. He has raised up many pious rulers and faithful ministers among us, and often poured out his Spirit in great abundance. He has lately revived religion in one place and another, and made large additions to some of our churches. And there is reason to believe that he will continue to pour out his Spirit in still larger and larger effusions, until the latter day glory shall commence in this western world. Notwithstanding therefore the present triumph of vice and infidelity, we may confidently hope that our churches will live, increase, and flourish, till the end of time. This God will do for us, for his great name's sake.

4. If God intends to own and build us up as his favorite people, then he has much for us to do, in carrying into execution his gracious designs. This is probably the last peculiar people which he means to form, and the last great empire which he means to erect, before the kingdoms of this world are absorbed in the kingdom of Christ. And if he intends to bring about these great events, he will undoubtedly make use of human exertions. Though in former ages he employed miracles to effect his purposes, yet he now carries on all his designs by the instrumentality of second causes. Hence we have no ground to expect to be made a great and happy people without our own labor and exertions. God employed the seed of Abraham as instruments of raising themselves to that national prosperity and happiness which he had long before promised the father of the faithful. The children of Israel, after they took possession of the land of promise, were called to great exertions, in order to reach that perfection in religion and government which placed them at the head of the world. It was a work of time and difficulty to conquer their enemies, and to extend their own settlements to the utmost limits which God had prescribed. It was a work of vast labor and expense to prepare a place for the seat of their religion and government, and to erect a magnificent temple for the visible residence of the invisible Deity, whom they acknowledged to be the great object of their supreme affection and homage. And will it not require equal exertions to fulfil the designs of Heaven towards our rising nation? The world is in arms and opposed to our national prosperity and existence. We must, therefore, like

the Israelites, fight our way to empire, in opposition to the power, and policy, and disorganizing principles of the most formidable nations on earth. And it is much to be feared that while we have wars without, we shall have fightings within, and alternately experience the dreadful calamities of despotism, anarchy, and confusion. There is even a present prospect of perilous times, which will require the friends of virtue, of religion, and of government, to make more vigorous exertions in support of these important objects than they have yet been called to make. It seems that piety and patriotism will be put to the severest trials. Christian rulers, christian ministers, and christian professors, may soon have occasion to exercise that zeal, and fortitude, and self-denial, which our pious ancestors and the primitive christians displayed. It is to be expected that bolder attacks will be made upon our civil and religious privileges, by those who are bent upon banishing all religion and government from the earth, whenever they can get more power into their hands. And it is evident their power is at present increasing; and it will certainly continue to increase, unless the most wise and vigorous measures are pursued to restrain it. God is now loudly proclaiming that we have much to do to maintain his cause, and promote his designs, in opposition to his and our enemies.

5. This subject teaches us how we ought to feel and to act in our present situation. Our feelings and conduct ought to be in conformity with the past and present dispensations of divine providence towards us. It appears from the conduct of God that he has been pleased to make us his favorite people, and to hold us up to the view of the world as the objects of his peculiar regard. He loved our fathers, and suffered no weapon nor design formed against them to prosper. He remarkably assisted and succeeded us in our long and distressing struggles for liberty and independence. He has since enabled us to establish and maintain an excellent constitution of government, and to defeat all the attempts which have been made to involve us in anarchy and confusion. While other nations are groaning under all the calamities of war, he allows us to dwell in peace and safety. And while the rights of conscience and the means of public worship are denied to other nations, he permits us to enjoy his word and ordinances without the least compulsion or restraint. These great and distinguishing favors call for our warmest gratitude to our divine Benefactor. We ought to remember with the most grateful emotions of heart, the years of the right hand of the Most High, and devoutly praise him for the civil and religious, the public and private blessings which he has so liberally bestowed upon our

nation. There is nothing more displeasing to God in his peculiar people, than ingratitude. And if we murmur and repine under all our civil and religious advantages, he may justly upbraid us in this pointed language: "Hear, O heavens: and give ear, O earth: I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider."

The goodness of God to us his favorite people, demands our confidence as well as our gratitude. Since he has never forsaken us, but always appeared on our side, when men rose up against us, we ought to confide in his care and protection, in these perilous times. We may be assured, that he will not give us up to ruin, as long as his own glory requires our existence and prosperity. Though he may try us and chastise us for our deep declensions, yet he will in due time interpose for our relief and deliverance. He seems to have permitted our enemies to push their schemes, and disclose their designs too fast, on purpose to open our eyes to see the destructive nature of their vain philosophy, which threatens the subversion of our laws and religion. And their unhallowed zeal has actually alarmed not only the virtuous part of our nation, but even many who were inclining to the cause of infidelity. Those of this last description begin to believe and acknowledge, that the principles of virtue and piety are essential to our political safety and happiness. It is easy to see that God may make use of civil and religious delusions, to establish the principles of true religion and good government. And it is our duty, at this day, to place an unshaken confidence in him, to bring light out of darkness, truth out of error, and order out of confusion. Let all ranks and classes of men feel their dependence on God, and place their ultimate dependence on his almighty protection. While all the powers of darkness are seeking their ruin, in God there is perfect safety. Our fathers trusted in him and were delivered. And the pious Psalmist exhorts every class of people to trust in God, with full confidence of his presence and protection, in the midst of national calamities. "O Israel, trust thou in the Lord: he is their help and their shield. O house of Aaron, trust in the Lord: he is their help and their shield. Ye that fear the Lord, trust in the Lord: he is their help and their shield. The Lord hath been mindful of us: he will bless us: he will bless the house of Israel, he will bless the house of Aaron. He will bless them that fear the Lord, both small and great. The Lord will increase you more and more, you and your children. Ye are blessed of the Lord, who made heaven and earth."

But faith without works is dead. Confidence in God, without proper exertions, is presumption. We shall incur his displeasure, if we hope for his peculiar favor without acting as his peculiar people. We have no ground to expect, that God will afford us his peculiar assistance, unless we use all the means in our power to defend ourselves. And these we have great encouragement to use. The object to be attained is of vast magnitude, nothing less than the preservation of a nation, destined to be the ornament and admiration of the world, and the seat of virtue, piety, and happiness. Let us therefore take courage, and with united ardor and zeal, repel every weapon formed and pointed against us. If we would promote the great ends for which it hath pleased the Lord to raise us up and set us apart for himself, we must avoid all unnecessary intercourse and connections with those apostate and infidel nations, who are aiming to corrupt and destroy us. We must feel and express a proper detestation of their religious and political delusions. We must guard the rising generation against their vain philosophy and destructive sentiments in morals, religion, and government. We must maintain a warm and persevering attachment to our own excellent religious and political institutions. We must be careful to fill our churches, our legislatures, our courts, and all our public and private schools, with men of sound principles in morals and religion. We must learn to distinguish good government from tyranny on the one hand, and from that liberty which is licentiousness, on the other. We must imbibe the spirit and follow the example of our pious ancestors, who were no less engaged to promote the purity and prosperity of the church, than the safety and happiness of the state. Our first and principal exertions are to be made in support of religion, which is the only basis that can support our free and efficient government; and which is the only thing that can properly denominate us the peculiar people of God.

And while we are sincerely engaged to promote his cause, we may sincerely and fervently pray that his blessing may attend our exertions. We have always found him a prayer-hearing God. For "what nation is there so great, who hath had God so nigh unto them, as the Lord our God has been in all things we have called upon him for?" How often did our fathers fast and pray in the times of their distress! And how often did God hear and answer their requests! How often have their pious posterity imitated their pious example, and have found it not a vain thing to call upon God! Our late public deliverances have been evidently granted in answer to our public and united fastings and prayers. Let us now

therefore, carry all our own interests in subordination to the interests of Zion, to the throne of divine grace, in the spirit and language of God's peculiar people. "Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of thy name; and deliver us, and purge away our sins for thy name's sake. Wherefore should the heathen say, Where is their God? Let him be known among the heathen in our sight by the revenging of the blood of thy servants which is shed. And render unto our neighbors sevenfold into their bosom their reproach wherewith they have reproached thee, O Lord. So we thy people and sheep of thy pasture will give thee thanks for ever: we will show forth thy praise to all generations." Amen.

SERMON XIII.

JEROBOAM.

ANNUAL FAST, APRIL 9, 1801.

And they made Jeroboam the son of Nebat king; and Jeroboam drave Israel from following the Lord. — 2 Kings, xvii. 21.

In reading the history of nations, we commonly meet with some memorable events, which had peculiar influence upon their rise, progress, declension, and final ruin. Such events, whether recorded in sacred or profane history, are of all others the most entertaining and instructive. The first memorable event in the history of the Jews, is the calling of Abram, the father of the nation. The second memorable event is the descent of Jacob and his family into Egypt. The third memorable event is the return of the children of Israel to their own land. The fourth memorable event is the introduction of kingly government, under Saul the son of Kish. And the next memorable event is the accession of Jeroboam the son of Nebat to the throne of Israel. This strange and deplorable event laid the foundation for a train of national calamities, which have continued from that day to this; and how much longer they may continue, we pretend not to be able to determine. For the admonition and instruction of all future ages, God has been pleased to record the character and conduct of Jeroboam, together with the fatal consequences of his impious reign, with great particularity and plainness. The sacred historian never loses sight of the baneful effects of his administration, from the twelfth chapter of the first book of Kings to the seventeenth chapter of the second book of Kings, which contains the words of our text. Here his history terminates, with the account of the captivity and dispersion of the once happy people whom he corrupted and destroyed.

It is the design of the present discourse,

I. To draw the character of Jeroboam, before he was king.

II. To represent the state of the nation when they made him king.

III. To inquire how it came to pass that they did make him king.

IV. To show what methods he employed, after they had made him king, to drive them from following the Lord.

I. The character of Jeroboam before he was king, deserves particular attention.

He early discovered some of those distinguishing natural and moral qualities, which formed him for the extraordinary part which he finally acted on the stage of life. His natural genius was sprightly, bold, and enterprising, which he evidently cultivated, notwithstanding the peculiar disadvantages and embarrassments, which attended his education. Though he lost his father in his youth, and was left to the care of his mother, who was a widow; yet by the mere dint of his brilliant talents and close application, he recommended himself to the notice and patronage of his wise and sagacious sovereign. We read, "Jeroboam was the son of Nebat, an Ephrathite of Zereda, Solomon's servant, whose mother's name was Zeruiah, a widow woman. And the man Jeroboam was a mighty man of valor: and Solomon seeing the young man that he was industrious, he made him ruler over all the charge of the house of Joseph." His appointment to such an office, by such a penetrating prince, is an infallible evidence of his popular talents and pleasing address. These excellent and amiable accomplishments, had they been properly directed to the public good, would have rendered him a great blessing to the nation.

But it appears from his history, that a base, turbulent, ambitious spirit led him to prostitute his fine abilities to the vilest purposes. Whether his ungovernable disposition were owing to the unhappy circumstance of being deprived of paternal instruction and restraint, or to a native malignity of heart, it certainly prompted him to disturb the peace of society, and oppose the best form and administration of government. For, though Solomon highly favored him, and put him into a lucrative office in one of the principal tribes of Israel, yet he conspired against his royal master, and became a ringleader in sedition. His business of collecting the public taxes in the tribe of Ephraim and Manasseh, gave him a peculiar opportunity of tampering with the people, and of instilling into their minds the most absurd prejudices against the king and his public measures. He could easily persuade the unthinking multitude, that they were unreasonably loaded with taxes, and

that they ought to do themselves justice by overturning the government. Having in this or some other way, widely diffused a disloyal and rebellious spirit among the people, he presumed to throw off the mask and appear in open opposition to the best of princes. It is expressly said, "He lifted up his hand against the king. And this was the cause that he lifted up his hand against the king: Solomon built Millo, and repaired the breaches of the city of David his father." Here it is strongly intimated, that Jeroboam complained of oppression, and that he made this complaint with a view to destroy his sovereign, and eventually seize his throne. This was a most bold and daring attempt in a young man; for which he deserved to be treated as an ungrateful and detestable traitor. Accordingly the king "sought to kill Jeroboam:" but by some means or other, Jeroboam fled into Egypt, and remained there, until the death of Solomon.

This seems to have been the most fatal period in Jeroboam's life; for whilst he lived in that land of idols, he totally apostatized from the religion of his country, in which he had been early initiated, and became a gross idolater. He was certainly of the seed of Abraham, and probably born and educated in Jerusalem, where he received the seal of circumcision, and usually attended all the religious institutions which God had appointed. These things must have made deep impressions on his young and tender mind, which he could not easily, nor instantly eradicate. It must have required strong and repeated efforts to disbelieve what he had once firmly believed, and to despise what he had once inwardly revered. Hence it is to be presumed that he gradually apostatized from the religion of his country. Whilst he lived in Jerusalem, where all the tribes of Israel statedly repaired to worship the only living and true God, it is probable he treated sacred and divine things, with apparent decency and respect. But after he removed from the seat of true religion, to take the charge of the house of Joseph, he had a fair opportunity of neglecting those religious duties, and of renouncing those religious principles, which laid a painful restraint upon his corrupt inclinations and pursuits. He was, no doubt, an infidel at heart, while he was sowing the seeds of sedition, and plotting to ruin his king and country; but for political reasons, he might not openly avow his infidelity, until he fled into Egypt, to escape the hand of public justice. Having taken this desperate step, and exchanged a land of moral light for a land of moral darkness, neither his interest, nor his reputation required him any longer to conceal his sentiments, but all the circumstances in which he was placed, conspired to form him a complete, confirmed, and avowed

apostate. He could do nothing more gratifying to the Egyptians, than openly to conform to their religion, and renounce his own. And a man of such a corrupt and intriguing disposition as he was, would not hesitate a moment to sacrifice his God, his religion, and his eternal interest, to answer his political views, and effectually secure popular influence and applause. He could not have lived among a more dangerous people than the Egyptians, who were then the most noted nation in the world, for learning, magnificence, superstition, and the grossest idolatry. Hence his residence in Egypt prepared him to return to his native country a more bitter enemy to the God of Israel, and a more malignant opposer of all his sacred rites and institutions, than any pagan priest, or Egyptian philosopher. Such was the ominous character of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, before he reached the object of his wishes, and was placed in the first seat of government. I proceed,

II. To represent the state of the nation, when a base and unprincipled majority raised him to a supreme power.

His two immediate predecessors were great and illustrious princes, who reigned long and prosperously. David was a mighty man of war, who subdued the enemies of his country, enlarged the boundaries of his kingdom, and when he died, left his people in the enjoyment of perfect peace. Solomon, his son and heir, was a wise and peaceful prince, who employed all the resources of his noble and capacious mind, in refining, enriching, and strengthening his kingdom. He built a beautiful and magnificent temple for the residence and service of God. He instituted the best regulations for the decent and devout performance of public worship. He built, and repaired, and fortified, a great number of cities; and made ample provision for the general defence of the country. He raised a large navy, and enriched both himself and his people by an extensive and lucrative commerce. Silver and gold were in his days, as plenty in Jerusalem as stones in the street. By promoting the interest and happiness of his people, he attracted the notice and admiration of the world. We are told, "Judah and Israel dwelt safely every man under his vine and fig-tree, from Dan even unto Beer-sheba all the days of Solomon. And there came of all people to hear the wisdom of Solomon, from all the kings of the earth, who had heard of his wisdom." The children of Israel never enjoyed so much peace and prosperity in any period of their national existence, as they enjoyed during the glorious reign of Solomon. And when he ceased to govern the nation, he left them in a more free, flourishing, and happy situation than any other people

then in the world. Such was the state of things when Jeroboam the son of Nebat ascended the throne of Israel.

Let us now inquire,

III. How it came to pass that ten tribes out of twelve should raise such an impious and dangerous man to royal dignity.

Jeroboam had not the least claim to the crown, either by birth or by merit. He was the son of Nebat a servant; he had acted the part of a traitor; and he had fled from his country to escape the punishment which he had justly deserved. Besides, Rehoboam was the proper heir to the throne of his father, and had arrived at the most proper age to take the reins of government into his hands. How then should it ever enter the minds of the nation to make choice of the son of Solomon's servant to reign over them? The answer to this is easy. Jeroboam the son of Nebat had long been a man of intrigue. He had secretly employed every artifice to prejudice the people against the former administration of government, and had openly presumed to lift up his hand against the king. All this he had done before he fled into Egypt; and it is extremely probable that during his residence there he kept up a secret and traitorous correspondence with the disaffected in Israel, and only waited for the death of Solomon to return and seize his throne. It is certain however, that as soon as Solomon expired, his disaffected subjects immediately sent to Egypt for Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and set him up as the rival of Rehoboam, the proper heir to the crown. Let us read the account of this extraordinary conduct. "And Solomon slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David his father. And Rehoboam his son reigned in his stead. And Rehoboam went to Shechem: for all Israel were come to Shechem to make him king. And it came to pass when Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who was in Egypt, heard of it, that they sent and called him. And Jeroboam and all the congregation of Israel came and spake unto Rehoboam, saying, Thy father made our yoke grievous: now therefore make the grievous service of thy father, and his heavy yoke which he put upon us, lighter, and we will serve thee. And he said unto them, Depart yet for three days, then come again to me. And the people departed." So far Jeroboam succeeded in his designs. He had long been preaching and acting sedition. And he found upon his return from Egypt, that he had actually thrown the people into a strong delusion, by making them really believe that they had been cruelly oppressed under the reign of Solomon. He also perceived that the major part of the nation were ready to join with him in opposing Rehoboam, who had given him three days to employ all his political skill to rob him of his subjects.

This precious opportunity he undoubtedly improved to the best advantage, to prepare himself and his friends for the next meeting; the result of which completely answered his highest expectations. "So Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam the third day, as the king had appointed. And the king answered the people roughly, and forsook the old men's counsel, and spake unto them after the counsel of the young men, saying, My father made your yoke heavy, and I will add to your yoke: my father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions. So when all Israel saw that the king hearkened not unto them, the people answered the king, saying, What portion have we in David? neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse. To your tents, O Israel. So Israel departed unto their tents;" and made Jeroboam the son of Nebat king.

It is now easy to see how this subtle and aspiring man obtained the suffrages of the nation in his favor. It was through his own intrigues, which deluded and infatuated the ten tribes. He actually made himself king, by disaffecting the people to the administration of his predecessor; and he caused this disaffection by basely misrepresenting the wise measures of that wise and excellent ruler. He might have justly complained of Solomon's idolatry and deep declension in religion; but he made no such complaint, because he knew it would not answer his purpose. He therefore made a more popular objection, and loudly exclaimed against the intolerable burden of public taxes. These indeed had been uncommonly high, but no higher than the public good had required. Though Solomon exacted large sums from the people, yet he applied the money he raised to the most public and beneficent purposes. And while he saw it necessary to lay heavy taxes upon his subjects, he pursued at the same time the wisest and best measures to enrich the nation, and enable them to contribute largely to the national prosperity and happiness. Under such circumstances the people had no just cause for complaining of public expenses; but ought to have approved and admired an administration which made them extremely rich and prosperous. And had it not been for the false and artful misrepresentations of Jeroboam and his accomplices, the whole nation would most probably have been quite easy and contented under the government of the wisest prince that ever swayed a royal sceptre. Hence it appears to have been primarily owing to *a political delusion*, brought about by Jeroboam himself, that the ten tribes were so unwise as to make choice of him instead of Rehoboam to govern the kingdom.

It now remains to show,

IV. What methods Jeroboam the son of Nebat employed, to corrupt and destroy the people, who had given him his power.

It is a melancholy truth, that he did "drive Israel from following the Lord," and involve them in a series of calamities, until they were dispersed and lost among the nations of the earth. There is something so extraordinary and so instructive in this part of Jeroboam's conduct, that it deserves the deep attention of both rulers and subjects.

Conscious of having raised himself to the first seat of government, by corruption and delusion, he felt the absolute necessity of cherishing and promoting these destructive evils, in order to maintain his ill-gotten power and influence. Accordingly we are told, what it is natural to believe, that he was greatly afraid that the people would first kill him, and then return to Rehoboam, from whom he had caused them to revolt. Hence he was determined to "drive Israel from following the Lord," and effectually prevent their ever returning to the house and worship of God in Jerusalem. This appears from the account we find in the text and context. "And they made Jeroboam the son of Nebat king: and Jeroboam drave Israel from following the Lord, and made them sin a great sin. For the children of Israel walked in all the sins of Jeroboam which he did; they departed not from them, until the Lord removed Israel out of his sight, as he had said by all his servants the prophets." According to this representation, Jeroboam was instrumental of corrupting not only that generation who made him king, but their children and their children's children, until they were completely ripened for ruin.

The natural course of moral corruption in the body politic is from the head to all the members. Accordingly we find that Jeroboam corrupted all the people of Israel from generation to generation, by corrupting all their kings and princes. It appears from the history of the kings of Israel, that they were all corrupted, and became corrupters, by following the pernicious example of Jeroboam the son of Nebat. Nadab, his immediate successor, imbibed his spirit, imitated his conduct, and lost his life. Baasha "walked in the way of Jeroboam and made the people of Israel to sin." Zimri and Elah resembled Jeroboam in their character and conduct. Zimri died "for the sins which he sinned in doing evil in the sight of the Lord, in walking in the way of Jeroboam." Omri "wrought evil in the eyes of the Lord, and did worse than all that were before him. For he walked in the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and in the sin wherewith he made Israel to sin." Ahab "did evil in the sight of the Lord above all that were

before him, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat." Ahaziah "did evil in the sight of the Lord, and walked in the way of his father, and in the way of his mother, and in the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin." Jehoram "cleaved unto the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin; and departed not therefrom." Jehu "departed not from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin." Jehoahaz "did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, and followed the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin; he departed not therefrom." Jehoash "did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord; he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin; but he walked therein." Jeroboam, the son of Jehoash, "did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord: he departed not from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin." Zechariah "did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, as his fathers had done: he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin." Menahem "did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord; he departed not all his days from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin." Pekahiah "did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord; he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin." Pekah "did evil in the sight of the Lord; he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin." Thus Jeroboam the son of Nebat "drave Israel from following the Lord," not only through his life time, but for near two hundred and fifty years after his death. He corrupted twenty kings in succession, and almost all their subjects. And though his reign was comparatively short, yet he did more to corrupt and demoralize a virtuous and religious people, than can be easily described or conceived.

The question now is, what methods did he employ to "drive Israel from following the Lord?" His character and conduct before he came to the throne, will not admit of the supposition of his acting ignorantly or inadvertently. And it appears from his history, that he exerted all his talents to devise the most effectual means of extinguishing every spark of true religion and virtue in the minds of his subjects. Here, then it may be observed,

1. That he prohibited the worship of the true God, by substituting in the place of it the worship of graven images. The inspired historian gives us a particular account of this bold and impious method to banish all true religion and morality from his kingdom. "And Jeroboam said in his heart, Now

shall the kingdom return to the house of David. If this people go up to do sacrifice in the house of the Lord at Jerusalem, then shall the heart of this people turn again unto their lord, even unto Rehoboam king of Judah; and they shall kill me, and go again to Rehoboam king of Judah. Wherefore the king took counsel, and *made two calves of gold*, and said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. And he set the one in Bethel, and the other put he in Dan. And this thing became a sin; for the people went to worship before the one even unto Dan." This was taking advantage of the corruption of human nature. Mankind must have some religion, and they naturally prefer any false religion to the true. If Jeroboam had prohibited all religion, he would have displeased his people and alienated their affections from him. But by instituting idolatry, which was a corruption of true religion, he exactly hit the ruling passion of the children of Israel, who were perpetually fond of the idols of the heathen; and took the most artful and effectual method to wean them from the house and worship of the true God in Jerusalem.

2. He appointed new times as well as new places of public worship. These two measures were intimately connected, and calculated to render each other the more effectual. To change the day as well as the places of religious worship, had a direct tendency to distinguish Israel from Judah, and to draw a lasting line of separation between the two kingdoms. His policy clearly appears in what the sacred historian says concerning his appointment of new holy days. "And he made an house of high places, and ordained a feast in the eighth month, on the fifteenth day of the month, like unto the feast that is in Judah." The general similarity between this religious festival and that of divine institution, was designed to favor the customs and habits of the people, which could not be easily and safely disturbed; while the dissimilarity of the month and of the day of the month, would answer all his purposes without raising the least opposition to the measure. These two steps suggested another, and naturally led him,

3. To make new appointments to office. As his darling object was to corrupt and destroy the true religion; so he discarded the regular and faithful priests of the Lord, and appointed others to supply their place who were attached to his person and cause, though of the vilest character and of the meanest condition. It is repeatedly said, "He made priests of the lowest of the people, who were not of the sons of Levi." And it is added, "This thing became sin unto the house of

Jeroboam, even to cut it off, and to destroy it from off the face of the earth." It was a profane and presumptuous act in Jeroboam to despise and reject those whom God himself had appointed to minister in holy things; and it deserved the severest marks of the divine displeasure. This he knew; but he was resolved to shake every sacred as well as civil officer from his seat, rather than to lose his own. We are not, indeed, informed whom he appointed to stand around his person, and assist him in the administration of government; but who can doubt, whether he did not display the same corruption of heart in appointing the officers of state, which he had displayed in appointing the officers of religion? He sought nothing but his own interest; and this required him to raise such men to places of power and influence, both in church and state, as would heartily approve and promote his design of spreading religious terror and delusion through all the tribes of Israel. These were the public measures which he employed, "to drive Israel from following the Lord." But it must be farther observed,

4. That he enforced these measures by all the weight and influence of his own example. It appears from his character and conduct in early life, that he possessed, in a high degree, the art of captivating and corrupting all sorts of people, with whom he conversed. And when he was clothed with the ensigns of royalty, his power and opportunity of corrupting his subjects greatly increased. He became the standard of taste, and the model of imitation. His sentiments and manners became a living law to his subjects. In his familiar intercourse with all around him, he undoubtedly seized those soft moments, which were the most favorable to his malignant design of seduction. This he could do without departing from the dignity of his station; but it appears that he did more than this, and even stooped to mingle with the priests, and "to burn incense upon the altars of the golden gods of his own making." He was such an apostate from the true religion, and such a bigot to idolatry, that he esteemed nothing too low nor too mean to be done, that would serve to eradicate every moral and religious principle from the minds of the people. Hence it is natural to conclude, that he did more "to drive Israel from following the Lord," by his personal example, than by all the other methods he employed for that impious purpose. And indeed, his example is oftener mentioned than any thing else, as the fatal cause of corrupting and destroying the people whom he governed. High and low, rich and poor, princes and people, are said "to walk in the ways of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin." It is certain, however,

that his loose and irreligious example gave peculiar weight and authority to his idolatrous institutions and his partial appointments in church and state; and largely contributed "to drive all the tribes of Israel from following the Lord," and eventually to plunge them in perpetual ruin.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. The character and conduct of Jeroboam may lead us to form a just estimate of good rulers. Every thing appears in the truest light by the way of contrast. Folly is a foil to wisdom; vice is a foil to virtue; false religion is a foil to that which is true; and wicked rulers are a foil to those who are wise and faithful. These however are often despised and reproached, when they deserve to be esteemed and admired. Though Solomon was the greatest man and the wisest king that ever adorned an earthly throne; and though the measures which he devised and pursued raised his kingdom to the summit of national prosperity; yet his subjects did not duly appreciate the blessings of his reign until he was succeeded by a vile and impious usurper. Then the striking contrast between Solomon and Jeroboam could not fail to open the eyes of a stupid and ungrateful nation. Those who had unreasonably murmured under the wise and gentle administration of the best of rulers, must have found the little finger of Jeroboam thicker than the loins of a wise and lenient prince. Solomon did a great deal to promote the temporal and eternal interests of his subjects; but Jeroboam did as much to ruin his subjects both in time and eternity. Never before was there a greater contrast between two rulers in succession, than between Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who drave Israel from following the Lord, and his great and illustrious predecessor. It seems God intended by this contrast, to make the house of Israel deeply sensible of the preëminent virtues and services of Solomon. And by recording this contrast, he undoubtedly meant to teach future nations properly to appreciate those who govern them in wisdom and integrity. Let us all learn this lesson, and especially those who have complained of the late wise and gentle administration of government. It is more than possible that our nation may find themselves in the hand of a Jeroboam, who will drive them from following the Lord; and whenever they do, they will rue the day, and detest the folly, delusion, and intrigue, which raised him to the head of the United States.

2. The character and conduct of Jeroboam plainly teach us what a dreadful scourge wicked rulers may be to their subjects. We can no where find the character of a hypocritical

and unprincipled sovereign so fully delineated as in the history of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin. He is not only described before he came to the throne, and while he was in the exercise of supreme power, but he is represented as deceiving and destroying multitudes for ages after his death. And as the inspired historian drew such a large and lively portrait of his character on purpose to instruct, so it is extremely full of instruction. Who would have thought of ascribing the idolatry of twenty kings, and the degeneracy of a whole kingdom during twenty reigns, to the conduct of one man, had not God, who perfectly knew the extensive influence of his example, expressly told us that he was the primary cause of such an amazing train of national calamities? How happy were the twelve tribes of Israel when Jeroboam the son of Nebat began to reign! David and Solomon had exerted all their power, wisdom and piety, to strengthen, enlarge, enrich, refine and reform the nation. They had been the happy instruments under God of rendering the Hebrews the most virtuous, the most religious, and the most happy nation on earth. But how soon did Jeroboam the son of Nebat reverse the scene, and completely blast all their bright and rising prospects! He designedly drave them from following the Lord, and cruelly deprived them of that magnificent temple which they had expended so much labor and treasure to erect. He put a final period to their hearing the public instructions of their public teachers, and to their observing those religious institutions which God had appointed for their spiritual benefit. He set them an example of that gross idolatry which exposed them to the frowns of God in this life, and to his everlasting displeasure in the life to come. He divided the nation, destroyed the peace of his own subjects, and involved them in all the horrors of war. He dried up the sources of national wealth, and entailed poverty, meanness and reproach upon the ten tribes to the latest generation. This is a true but shocking picture of a ruler who fears not God nor regards man. It appears from fact, that such a ruler is able and disposed to destroy every thing that a nation holds most dear and valuable in this world or the next. And the more happy a people are when they fall under the power of such a depraved and unprincipled tyrant, the more they have to lose, and the more they have to suffer as long as his authority or his influence shall last.

3. It appears from the intriguing character described in this discourse, how easily any people may be led into civil and religious delusion, by artful and designing politicians. The people of God, one would have supposed, were proof against every species of delusion, especially in the days of Solomon,

who instructed as well as governed them with superior wisdom and integrity. Besides providing them with sacred teachers, he even condescended to give them the best civil and religious instruction himself. This we learn not merely from his general character, but from the particular account which the writer of his life has given us of his superior talents, and of the extensively useful purposes to which he applied them. He says, "God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the sea shore. And he spake three thousand proverbs; and his songs were a thousand and five." Though many of his songs and proverbs are lost, yet those which have come into our hands we know are full of civil and religious instruction. Where can we find the duty of rulers and of subjects more clearly exhibited or more strongly enforced, than in his writings? His proverbs contain the practical wisdom of ages, and convey to persons of all characters and conditions the most useful information, in the most striking and familiar manner. A great statesman said, "Let me compose the ballads for a nation, and let who will make their laws." His meaning is, that whatever be the instruction, whether good or bad, that which is most easily and most universally circulated among the mass of the people, will have the greatest influence in forming their sentiments and governing their practice. If this observation be just, then while Solomon made the songs and proverbs for the people of God, they enjoyed the best advantages for gaining civil and religious information; and in that respect were especially guarded against civil and religious delusion. But it appears from the history of Jeroboam, that he could easily seduce this intelligent and well-informed people. When he first appeared in public, he had the address to poison the sentiments of Solomon's subjects, and to alienate their affections from him. When he was more advanced in years, and more acquainted with human nature and the arts of intrigue, he so completely blinded and deluded the ten tribes of Israel, that they unanimously made him king, and sacrificed all their political happiness to gratify his avarice and ambition. And when he had thus led them into one political error after another, his infidelity pushed him on to throw them into a greater and more fatal delusion. Having easily intrigued them out of their government, he as easily intrigued them out of their religion, and plunged them into the grossest idolatry. But the house of Israel are not the only people who have been made blind to their private and public good by artful politicians. The Romans, at the zenith of their learning and refinement, were equally unable to stand before the arts of seduction. How

often did aspiring, eloquent, and designing men, raise popular commotions and insurrections, and take the advantage of political delusions to seize the reins of government? Though the Romans viewed themselves as connoisseurs in politics, yet all their political knowledge was totally insufficient to guard the weak side of human nature, and to prevent them from falling into the greatest political delusions. There is a natural propensity in mankind to oppose law and religion, and therefore their eyes and ears and hearts are always open to those base politicians, who promise to free them from such painful restraints. What astonishing delusions have prevailed and are still prevailing in France, and in many of the states and kingdoms of Europe? How have the Jeroboams of the present day succeeded in spreading political and religious delusions among the most enlightened nations? And who can tell us when or where these delusions will end? Human nature is the same in America as in all other parts of the world. We are no less exposed to be carried down the current of delusion than others were, who have been overwhelmed and destroyed.

4. It appears from the character and conduct of Jeroboam, that corrupt rulers will always aim to corrupt the faithful ministers of religion. No other men are so intimately connected with the great body of the people, and have such favorable opportunities of pouring instruction into their minds, and of conversing with them under all circumstances of life. And whether it be a favorable or unfavorable aspect upon the public good, it is a certain fact, that wise and faithful ministers have a larger share in the respect and confidence of the people in general, than those of any other character or profession. Of course they have more influence in forming the religious opinions, the common habits, and even the political sentiments of the subjects of governments, than many of those who are immediately concerned in public affairs. Besides, religion of any kind, whether true or false, takes a stronger hold of the human mind, and has a greater tendency to govern the actions of men, than any theoretical knowledge in any of the arts or sciences, or in any of the pursuits and concerns of the present life. The public teachers of religion, therefore, must necessarily be able in many ways, to weaken the hands, and obstruct the designs of corrupt rulers. And it naturally follows that they will endeavor by all means, to corrupt those who minister in holy things. This we find clearly illustrated by the conduct of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who drave Israel from following the Lord. He felt himself under a necessity of corrupting or of deposing the clergy. A number of the sons of Levi were so sincerely attached to the true religion, and so heartily

opposed to idolatry, that they could not be corrupted; but chose rather to be deposed from their office, and flee into the kingdom of Judah, than to lend their influence to promote his impious measures. But he soon found means to corrupt the whole body of the priests and bring them entirely over to his own views; which, above every thing else, firmly fixed him on the throne of Israel. The corrupt and unprincipled leaders in the late revolutions in France, have exactly imitated Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and pointed their peculiar vengeance against all the clergy in the kingdom who would not unite with them in spreading civil and religious delusions through the world. But here it is proper and striking to remark, that they have taken much larger strides than Jeroboam ever did; for he substituted a false religion in the room of the true; but they have attempted, and used all the means in their power, to extirpate all religion, whether true or false, and to introduce universal infidelity or skepticism. And it is always to be expected, that when the rulers of a nation apostatize from the religion in which they were educated, that they will endeavor to destroy it, and if possible, corrupt the public teachers of religion, and allure or drive them into their irreligious and demoralizing schemes. Should atheists or infidels fill the seats of our own government, the preachers of the gospel would be greatly exposed to their frowning or smiling influence. And even now there are some in power who begin to frown upon those ministers who dare to speak against their bold and impious exertions to break the bands of religion and morality, and open the door to universal licentiousness.

5. We learn from the character, conduct and history of Jeroboam, that it is the duty of the *public teachers* of religion, to bear public testimony against all attempts of those in authority to destroy the religion and morals of the people. Who will deny that it was the duty of prophets and priests to preach against the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, by which he made Israel to sin? He was ruining himself and his subjects by an open and avowed opposition to the God of Israel and to all his sacred institutions. Such conduct called aloud upon the public teachers of religion, to warn both Jeroboam and his people of their great criminality and danger. They could not answer it to God who put them into office, nor to the souls committed to their care, if they neglected or refused to bear solemn testimony against corrupters and those who were corrupted. Accordingly we find that the faithful prophets and priests did boldly reprove and admonish Jeroboam, and those who walked in his steps. They cried aloud and spared not, to show the prince and the people their transgressions, and

to forewarn them of the just judgments of God, which eventually fell upon them. While Jeroboam was in the presumptuous act of sacrificing to the idols he had made, the Lord sent a prophet to reprove his wickedness, and to predict his future punishment. "And behold, there came a man of God out of Judah by the word of the Lord unto Bethel: and Jeroboam stood by the altar to burn incense. And he cried against the altar in the word of the Lord, and said, O altar, altar, thus saith the Lord, Behold, a child shall be born unto the house of David, Josiah by name; and upon thee shall he offer the priests of the high places that burn incense upon thee. And he gave a sign the same day, saying, this is the sign which the Lord hath spoken; Behold, the altar shall be rent, and the ashes that are upon it shall be poured out. And it came to pass when king Jeroboam heard the saying of the man of God, which had cried against the altar in Bethel, that he put forth his hand from the altar, saying, Lay hold on him. And his hand which he put forth against him, dried up, so that he could not pull it in again to him. The altar also was rent, and the ashes poured out from the altar, according to the sign which the man of God had given by the word of the Lord." Such was the fortitude and fidelity of one prophet in reproving the apostate Jeroboam; and it appears that other prophets were no less bold and faithful in reproving him and his followers in idolatry, until the wrath of God came upon them to the uttermost. For we are told, "The children of Israel walked in all the sins of Jeroboam which he did; they departed not from them; until the Lord removed them out of his sight, as he had said by all his servants the prophets." These faithful ministers of God ceased not, though at the hazard of their lives, to reprove the kings as well as people of Israel, who walked in the ways of Jeroboam, and forewarned them of the fatal consequences of their shameful apostacy. Is not this a noble example, and well worthy of perpetual imitation? Should any now rise into power who possess the spirit and imitate the example of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, would it not become the ministers of Christ to imbibe the spirit and imitate the example of those, who boldly reproved that profane and impious corrupter of Israel? It is as true now as it was in the days of Solomon, that "righteousness exalteth a nation; and that sin is a reproach to any people." The religion of Christ has been the glory and happiness of our nation; and it would argue extreme unfaithfulness in the ministers of the gospel in these days, should they, for the sake of pleasing some, and for the fear of displeasing others, hold their peace, and suffer vice and infidelity to destroy our religion and government, without uniting their ef-

forts to prevent such deplorable evils? They are set for the defence of the gospel; and let them only be wise and faithful in the discharge of their duty, and they may safely confide in God, to wither the hand that shall be stretched out against them.

6. The nature and effects of Jeroboam's conduct, show us what we have to fear, should our civil rulers embrace and propagate the principles of infidelity. We have not so far lost our virtuous and religious habits, but that wise and virtuous rulers might, under Providence, restrain us from total declension and apostacy. But if those who fill the chief offices of state should openly renounce God and religion, it is difficult to see why they should not as easily and as universally corrupt our nation, as Jeroboam did the ten tribes of Israel. And who can say that men in power may not catch the spirit of the times, and follow the example of Jeroboam, or rather that of the late apostates in Europe? We are becoming more and more connected with those infidel nations, whose politicians and philosophers are the bold patrons and preachers of infidelity. This mutual intercourse affords a peculiar opportunity to try the whole force of their infatuating philosophy upon us in America. And it is beyond a doubt, that our rulers are the most exposed to their fatal delusions. What is there then to forbid our apprehensions, that those in the highest places of power may be corrupted, and actually apostatize from the religion of their country? And should they happen to apostatize, what could hinder them from driving our nation from following the Lord? Here lies the greatest danger to which we are at present exposed. Could we only maintain our religion and virtue, and stem the current of moral corruption, we should have ground to hope for future prosperity; but if the rulers of our land should renounce the Bible, and all the doctrines and duties taught in that sacred volume, we should have nothing to expect, but that the whole nation would be finally corrupted and destroyed.

7. It appears from what has been said in this discourse, that *civil and religious delusions* are the great evils which more especially call for our humiliation and mourning this day. Though we have been uncommonly happy and prosperous under the late administration of government; yet the people have loudly complained of public men and public measures, and by a majority of suffrages, placed the supreme power in different hands. And though we have been favored with the light of divine revelation, and been well instructed in the doctrines and duties of christianity; yet many individuals in various classes of men have renounced their former faith in the

inspiration of the scriptures and in the existence of God, and become open and zealous proselytes to the cause of infidelity. These strange and disastrous events must have been brought about by the arts of seduction. And the same men who, for the sake of subverting religion and government, have employed their artifice to promote civil and religious delusions, will wish and endeavor to increase them, to answer the same selfish purposes. These great and prevailing delusions are much to be lamented. They are not innocent errors, but national iniquities. They display the depravity of the heart, rather than the weakness of the understanding. God was highly displeased with Jeroboam for deluding Israel, and highly displeased with Israel for being carried away with his delusions. And he must be no less displeased with the deceivers and the deceived in our nation. Hence we have abundant reason to bewail the great and fatal delusions which are every day and every where prevailing among us. We ought to lament that any should cast off fear and restrain prayer before God, and actually disobey all human and divine laws; but we have much more cause to lament that so many should deny the existence of God, disbelieve the first principles of religion and virtue, strike at the foundations of government, and not only practice, but justify universal licentiousness. These are sins of the first magnitude in a land of gospel light, and are of all others the most alarming at the present day. God may justly expostulate with us as he did with his people of old. "What iniquity have your fathers found in me that they are gone far from me, and have walked after vanity, and are become vain? Wherefore I will yet plead with you, saith the Lord, and with your children's children will I plead. For pass over the isles of Chittim and see; and send unto Kedar, and consider diligently, and see if there be such a thing. Hath a nation changed their gods which are yet no gods? but my people have changed their glory for that which doth not profit. Be astonished, O ye heavens at this!" Let all the friends of God sigh and cry for the abominable and fatal delusions, which threaten us with the heaviest calamities that ever fell upon an ungrateful and apostate nation.

8. This subject teaches us the propriety and importance of praying for a general effusion of the divine Spirit. Without this, we have no ground to expect to be reclaimed from our deep declension. The best defences have been written in favor of our religion and government. The wisest measures have been adopted to open the eyes of the nation to see and pursue their best interests. An alarm has been sounded from the press and from the pulpit, to awaken the deluded from their

delusions. But it seems that the light which has been exhibited has served to increase the blindness of the blind; and the alarm which has been sounded has served to diminish the fears of the deluded. Hence it appears, that our national disorder lies in the heart, which bids defiance to all human exertions. The effusion of the divine Spirit is our only source of hope. Our present situation resembles the situation of Israel in the days of Jeroboam. No means nor motives could remove their delusions. While prophet after prophet admonished the corrupters and the corrupted, they still remained obstinate and bent to backsliding. God could have effectually reclaimed them by the influence of his Spirit; but it does not appear that he ever poured out his spirit upon Israel, after they yielded to the delusions of Jeroboam. But Judah, who never totally revolted, he frequently reformed, and for that purpose sent down the influences of his Spirit to change their hearts. And if God intends to save our nation, he will remove our delusions by the same divine influence. In this way he can easily confound the designs of the enemies and corrupters of christianity, and make even them the willing and active instruments of promoting the cause which they are attempting to destroy. It is, therefore, the special duty of this day of humiliation and prayer, to seek the outpourings of the Spirit. But who are prepared for this duty? Not infidels. They wish not to be undeceived. Their deception is their castle. They perfectly despise prayer, and the great and glorious object of prayer. Not the immoral. They dread all restraint, and especially that restraint which arises from the genuine convictions of the Spirit. Not mere moralists. They feel no need of a divine influence upon themselves or others. Who then are prepared to pray for the special operations of the divine Spirit? They are only real christians, who have seen the plague of their own hearts, and who believe the deep depravity of human nature. Such persons as these have the spirit of grace and supplication. And is there not a remnant of such characters among us, who sigh and cry for our national declension and apostacy? The effectual fervent prayers of these righteous persons will avail much. Let these, therefore, stand in the gap, and cry mightily to God to pour out his spirit, and save our nation from both temporal and eternal ruin. Amen.

SERMON XIV.

FALSE ZEAL.

ANNUAL FAST, APRIL 8, 1802.

THEY zealously affect you, but not well. — GAL. iv. 17.

AS LONG as the apostle Paul resided among the Galatians, they were highly pleased, both with his person and preaching. But very soon after they had been deprived of his public and private instructions, they became not only disaffected with his character, but extremely opposed to his doctrines. Certain Judaizing teachers crept in among them, who first corrupted their sentiments, and then used all their art and influence to alienate their affections from him who had converted them to the christian faith. Surprised at such a great and sudden change in the faith and feelings of his former friends, the Apostle pointedly reproves both the deceivers and the deceived. "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel; which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." After this severe anathema against these dangerous corrupters, he undertakes to describe and expose their most insinuating mode of seduction. "They zealously affect you, but not well; yea, they would exclude you, that ye might affect them." They are deceivers, and their power of deceiving lies in their peculiar zeal. They profess to be your warmest friends, whilst in reality they are your worst enemies. It is not your good, but their own, which

they are so ardently seeking. It highly becomes you, therefore, to beware of your danger, and guard yourselves against the fatal influence of their false zeal. This admonition suggests to our consideration a subject, which is by no means foreign from the present occasion. Accordingly, I propose in the ensuing discourse,

I. To describe the nature of zeal in general.

II. To distinguish false zeal from true.

III. To show how false zeal will dispose men to act.

I. We are to consider the nature of zeal in general.

Zeal is a strong and ardent affection of the heart towards some distant and desirable object. It is not a simple but complicated emotion, which admits of different degrees of ardor and sensibility, accordingly as its object appears more or less agreeable, more or less distant, or more or less important. To give a clear and just description of this peculiar passion, it is necessary to consider the various mental exercises of which it is composed, and by which it is nourished and invigorated.

Zeal always supposes a fixed and steady attention to the object upon which it terminates. A slight and cursory view of any agreeable objects, never excites in our breasts the least degree of zeal to make them our own. But it is a law of our nature, that a close and continued attention to any desirable object should draw all the affections of the heart towards it, and, of consequence, should produce the emotion of zeal. The Psalmist found this to be the effect of his deep meditation. "While I was musing the fire burned." Whatever agreeable subject seizes and absorbs the mind, will naturally enkindle the fire of zeal. We always feel more or less zealous in pursuing any object, or in prosecuting any design, which has weight and influence enough to gain our fixed and constant attention. And what we experience in ourselves, we frequently observe in others. Zeal is one of the first and strongest emotions which we discover in children. The reason is, the smallest trifles are sufficient to fill their minds, and engross their whole attention. And when greater trifles fill greater minds, they produce the same effect. Even philosophers and politicians often suffer the most vain and imaginary schemes to take the entire possession of their thoughts, and to fill their minds with a flame of zeal, which is astonishing to all who have never paid the same attention to the same ideal or trifling subjects.

But whatever be the object of zeal, it always appears to the person who feels this lively emotion to be a matter highly interesting, either on its own account, or on account of its supposed connection with some valuable end. No man can

zealously pursue any object or design which does not appear to himself worthy of pursuit. Though many spend much zeal in the pursuit of phantoms and trifles, yet so long as their zeal continues, these vanities have, in their view, the appearance of important realities. It is well known that the most easy way of exciting and inflaming the zeal of others, is to magnify the object or design which we wish them to espouse and promote. And if we can only impress on their minds a realizing sense that the end we propose is truly interesting and important, we shall most certainly inspire them with the passion of zeal. If we attend to our own feelings, we shall find that our zeal always rises as high as our sense of the importance of the object which excites it, and no higher. Hence it appears that not only a fixed and steady attention to a desirable object, but a realizing belief of its importance is necessary to create and support the emotion of zeal. Besides, those who are zealous in any cause or undertaking whatever, always have a sanguine expectation of accomplishing their design. Though they foresee difficulties and dangers in their way, yet they maintain and cherish a strong persuasion, that they shall eventually succeed. It was a secret and well-grounded hope of victory that inspired David with an ardent zeal to go against Goliah, who had defied the God and armies of Israel. And it was a strong, though vain expectation of revenge, that awakened the zeal of Pharaoh to pursue Moses and his people into the depths of the sea. He said in his heart, "I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil: I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them." The prospect of success is essential to the existence of zeal. Fire may as well live without air, as zeal without hope. But as long as men can persuade themselves that they shall sooner or later obtain the object of their pursuit, their zeal will continue to burn.

Zeal, therefore, is the most bold, active, persevering spirit, that ever possesses the minds of men. It never suffers them to abate their exertions, nor to neglect any opportunity of promoting the cause in which they are engaged. It inspires them with resolution and fortitude to meet and overcome all opposition. It awakens and invigorates all their powers of body and mind, and stimulates them to the greatest activity, patience and perseverance. The fire of zeal, like all other fire, the longer it burns, and the wider it spreads, the more it attracts every thing around it to feed its flame. A growing ardor, resolution and activity always mark the character and conduct of those whose minds are absorbed and governed by the passion of zeal; and it is never to be expected that they will either neglect or relinquish their darling object, until they have lost their power of exertion, or their hopes of success. I proceed,

II. To distinguish false zeal from true.

There is a zeal which forms a beautiful moral character. A strong and ardent desire to promote the public good, justly commands universal approbation and esteem. This the apostle observes, in the verse immediately succeeding the text. "But it is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing." It is the goodness of its ultimate object which renders zeal virtuous and amiable. When it ultimately seeks the promotion of a good cause, it is according to knowledge, it is agreeable to the dictates of reason and conscience, it is of a godly sort, and it resembles the zeal of the Lord of Hosts. He is the most zealous being in the universe. His whole heart is in his great and complicated scheme. He views every part as essential to the whole, and the whole as dependent upon every part; which necessarily renders his zeal, in accomplishing every part, perfectly uniform and infinitely strong. Those, therefore, who ardently seek the glory of God and the good of their fellow creatures, possess a truly benevolent and godly zeal. But false zeal has a diametrically opposite object, and ultimately seeks a selfish end. It is beyond a doubt, that men may be selfish as well as benevolent in their views and pursuits. And selfishness may pursue a selfish end with as much ardor and engagedness, as benevolence may pursue a benevolent end. Hence it appears that false zeal may rise as high as true, and indeed much higher; because it is extremely apt to estimate its object above its intrinsic and comparative importance. Besides, when a totally selfish heart is awakened into zeal, there is nothing in it to stem the tide of affections, which all unite and harmonize in the ardent pursuit of a selfish end. False zeal, therefore, often differs from true in its appearance as well as in its nature. True zeal is a strong, steady, uniform, benevolent affection; but false zeal is a strong, desultory, boisterous, selfish passion. The way is now prepared to show,

III. How false zeal will dispose men to act.

It is a powerful stimulus to action, and will dispose all men to act in the same manner, unless restrained by some different passion, or by some insurmountable obstacle. But though restraint may sometimes prevent its operation, yet it will never alter its nature and tendency. It will, if unrestrained, produce the same evil effects in time to come, which it has so often produced in time past. The experience and observation of ages, therefore, may direct us in tracing its fatal influence upon the feelings and actions of men.

1. It will dispose them to combine together in carrying on their destructive designs. This false fervor, like electrical fire, will easily and instantaneously spread from breast to breast among those who are ardently engaged in the same cause.

Zealots naturally feel and express a peculiar attachment to each other; their attachment produces a bond of union; their bond of union produces an intimacy; and their intimacy prepares them to combine their counsels and exertions, to promote the common object of their zeal. This evil tendency of false zeal may be illustrated by many instances recorded in sacred history. It was a false zeal which disposed Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, and two hundred and fifty princes in the camp of Israel, to combine together against the religion and government of divine appointment. It was a false zeal which combined the Edomites and other nations against the people of God, in their way to the promised possession. It was a false zeal which formed the fatal conspiracy against the Lord of glory. Though the Jewish sectaries were bitterly opposed to each other, yet their fiery zeal against the Son of God stifled their private personal animosities, and united their hearts and their hands to shed the blood of the Prince of Peace. Even Herod and Pontius Pilate, who before had been at perfect enmity, became friends on that occasion, and united their exertions in perpetrating that enormous wickedness. And it was the same spirit, which produced a conspiracy against the apostle Paul. After he had been acquitted by the chief priests at Jerusalem, we are told, "Certain of the Jews *banded together*, and bound themselves under a curse, that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul." Those who are inflamed with a false zeal will take any person into their favor and friendship, who appears to possess the same spirit, and to be attached to the same cause in which they are ardently engaged. The worst design that the worst men can propose, a false zeal will unite them in carrying into execution.

2. False zeal will hurry men on to act without regarding or even consulting the sober dictates of their own reason. It will not suffer them to make a proper use of that noble faculty which God has implanted in their breasts to direct them in all their private and public conduct. Those whom a false zeal has combined together in a bad cause always feel afraid to reason coolly and deliberately upon the object of their pursuit. They choose to be governed by their feelings rather than by their understandings. They are ready to imagine that their opinions are too plain and self-evident to require a train of reasoning to support and justify them. Zealots, who do not give a reason to themselves for their own opinions and conduct, are still more averse to giving a reason to others. This has been exemplified in a thousand cases; but I shall only mention one, which is related in scripture, for our learning and instruction. When Elijah interrogated the Israelites respecting their wor-

ship of idols, they refused to make him a rational reply. "And Elijah came unto all the people and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? And the people answered him not a word." They were zealously attached to Baal, and determined to follow him; but they would not converse upon the subject, nor give a reason for promoting a cause which God had expressly forbidden them to promote. False zeal naturally infatuates those who are under its blinding influence, and renders them not only indisposed to reason upon the subject which has too deeply engaged their partial feelings, but incapable of it. Though zealots are able to reason justly upon some subjects, yet they cannot reason clearly and consistently upon that which their false zeal has placed in a false light. This blind passion naturally pushes them on in the ardent pursuit of their favorite designs, without allowing them to consider what may be the fatal consequences of their precipitate conduct.

3. While men are under the influence of false zeal, they are prone to act, not only without consulting their own reason, but without hearkening to the reason of others. They are inclined to shut their ears against the most plain and conclusive arguments, which can be offered to their cool and candid consideration. The very attempt to enlighten their minds, to calm their feelings, and to restrain their conduct, by fair reasoning, will often raise their resentment and inflame their zeal. Pharaoh was advised, not only by Moses and Aaron, but by the principal men in his kingdom, to let the people of Israel go; but their wise and seasonable advice was so far from convincing his understanding, that it only increased his indignation and zeal against his wise and friendly advisers. Micaiah admonished Ahab against going up to Ramoth-Gilead; but he was so zealously engaged to go, that he treated the admonition with contempt, and punished the prophet for his faithful warning. It is the nature of false zeal to make men stop their ears against the calm and persuasive voice of reason. When Stephen made his defence before his corrupt and partial judges, they were so zealous to take away his life, that they would not give an attentive and patient hearing to that pious martyr; but in the midst of his pertinent and powerful plea, "They cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord, and cast him out of the city and stoned him." And when the great Apostle of the Gentiles preached against the idolatry of the Ephesians, it awakened their zeal to such a degree, that they filled the city with confusion; some crying one thing and some another, until at length they all cried out, for the space of two hours, "Great is Diana of the Ephe-

sians." Thus men will neither reason nor be reasoned with, when false zeal has taken the entire possession of their minds. "They are like the deaf adder, that stoppeth her ear; which will not hearken to the voice of charmers, charming never so wisely."

4. Those whom a false zeal has united together in a bad cause, are extremely fond of increasing their strength by bringing over as many as possible to their views and feelings. A false zeal is no less a proselyting than an infatuating spirit. Those who are deceived, as are all who are actuated by a blind zeal, have a strong inclination to deceive others. They will spare no pains, and neglect no favorable opportunities to propagate their absurd opinions, and to diffuse their infatuating spirit. The Scribes and Pharisees, whom our Saviour calls "blind leaders of the blind," would compass sea and land to make proselytes to their own errors and delusions. But zealots are no less artful than indefatigable in their efforts to attach others to their persons and pursuits. They will not hesitate to employ any measures which they imagine will serve to promote the popularity and success of their cause. The apostle represents them as full of art and deceit. "They zealously affect you, but not well." To gain the honest and unsuspicious, zealots will profess to be their best friends, who are seeking their best good. To gain the timid and wavering, they will represent their own party as strong and increasing, and the opposite party as weak and diminishing. To gain the selfish and ambitious, they will address their ruling passions by motives of honor or interest. In a word, they will misrepresent the plainest facts, asperse the brightest characters, applaud the meanest villains, and leave no method untried which they apprehend has a tendency to increase their numbers and carry their point. Absalom, in his false zeal, would turn into any shape, put on any disguise, and practice any art, to steal away the hearts of his father's subjects, and to accomplish his seditious and destructive designs. True zeal is fair and honest in all its measures; but false zeal is the very spirit of falsehood, hypocrisy and intrigue.

It may be farther observed,

5. It is the nature of false zeal to embolden and stimulate men to acts of violence and cruelty in effecting their sinister and selfish purposes. A bear robbed of her whelps is not more fierce and cruel, than those who are zealously engaged to accomplish a base and cruel design. Their fiery zeal sears their consciences and hardens their hearts: which prepares them to sacrifice without remorse either friends or foes, who stand in their way and oppose their views. Time would fail

to mention one instance in ten thousand of the fatal effects of this violent and cruel passion. David, in his false zeal, resolved to destroy an innocent family. The sons of Jacob, in their false zeal, laid a whole city in ruins. The Jews, in their false zeal, sacrificed their children to Moloch. Nebuchadnezzar, in his false zeal, threw Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. Herod, in his false zeal, slew all the babes of Bethlehem. Paul, in his false zeal, consented to the death of Stephen, and breathed out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of Christ, and endeavored to destroy the whole christian church. The heathens, in their false zeal, persecuted and tortured thousands and thousands, for no other cause than their naming the name of Christ. The Mohammedans, in their false zeal, have spilt rivers of blood to propagate their religious imposture. The papists, in their false zeal, have made a merit of destroying protestants with fire and faggots. And even protestants themselves, under the impulse of false zeal, have frequently been guilty of cruel persecution. If we search all sacred and profane history, we shall find that the most horrid acts of cruelty and violence have been perpetrated under the influence of a false and flaming zeal. Those therefore who are under the governing influence of this malevolent spirit will not hesitate to commit any acts of violence and barbarity, which they deem necessary to accomplish their inhuman purposes.

It only remains to make a proper application of this subject.

1. What has been said upon the nature and effects of false zeal, may help us to determine who are under its governing influence at the present day. All parties will readily allow that it greatly prevails in every part of the country, and deeply affects the views and feelings of a large portion of the people. But none perhaps are willing to own that *they* feel and act under the influence of such an infatuating spirit. I would not be so uncandid, therefore, as to apply the preceding discourse to any party or description of men to whom it does not properly and justly apply. And to determine this tender and interesting point, permit me to compare the marks of false zeal with the public conduct of the leading party in the nation, who are willing to be known and distinguished by the popular appellation of Republicans. But in speaking of these as a body, I would not be understood to assert, nor even to insinuate, that every individual among them speaks the same language, or feels the same spirit, or pursues the same mode of conduct. The comparison proposed, therefore, must be pleasing to all who do not find themselves justly implicated and condemned by it.

With caution, I proceed to inquire, whether the republicans have not uniformly discovered every mark of false zeal. Have they not been remarkable for their mutual attachment, their frequent intercourse, and their strong propensity to combine their counsels and exertions against the national government? They long opposed and obstructed the adoption of the federal constitution; and instead of abating, they increased their opposition, after it was adopted and carried into operation. They early formed themselves into separate and private societies in every state in the Union. The effects of these meetings transpired from time to time, in their uniform, systematic, and increasing efforts to embarrass every wise and salutary measure to preserve the principles and strengthen the energy of the general government. This rendered their private assemblies so odious and unpopular, that they seemed for a season to suspend them; but their steady union and harmony in sentiment and practice too clearly manifested that they still kept up a secret intercourse, and transmitted their views and designs to all their friends in the most extreme parts of the country. And as soon as they had so far succeeded in their measures as to bring their own men into administration, even their leading characters deigned to hold private meetings, in which, at the very seat of government, they devised and matured their deepest plans, before they proposed them to public discussion. By such modes of conduct, they have given too much evidence of a false and dangerous zeal. The same spirit appears in their rash and precipitate proceedings. They seem to have neglected the use of their rational powers, and pushed forward in their disorganizing scheme, without standing to consider to what lengths their warm and spurious zeal might eventually hurry them. Their ardent and impetuous desires to attain their ultimate end, seem to have compelled them to use such means as their own reason would have reprobated, had they suffered it to speak. This observation may be confirmed and illustrated by various instances of their conduct. Though they have often written to promote their cause, yet they have not written to the understandings, but to the passions and unreasonable prejudices of men. Their political publications have much more heat than light, and are extremely destitute of cool, candid, fair reasoning. One of their late writers, who is supposed to be a man in office, and a man of argument, disdains to reason, and only gives vent to his fiery zeal against the religion and government of his country. Their public speakers have also given still stronger evidence of their reluctance to awaken their reasoning faculty. They have exhibited a singular phenomenon in a deliberate assembly, by refusing to give public

reasons for public measures. Though they were not afraid to lift up their hands to carry their points, yet it seems they were afraid to open their lips and lift up their voice, to explain or justify the reasons of their legislative acts. Could this have proceeded from any other spirit, than their false and unreasonable zeal in an unreasonable cause ?

Besides, they have not only neglected to give reasons for their political principles and practice; but refused to regard what others have written and said against their peculiar modes of thinking and acting.

Vigorous efforts have been made to rectify the errors of their understanding, and to turn their flaming love of liberty into a proper channel; but they have generally remained deaf to the loudest remonstrances of reason. The federal constitution has been defended by the strongest arguments that could be drawn from the wisdom and experience of the whole civilized world; but still their first characters persevere in opposing its most rational and essential principles. Very lately they proposed to strike away one of the main pillars upon which it was founded; and what they proposed they actually carried, in opposition to the most clear and powerful reasonings that ever were exhibited in the debates of our own, or of any other national assembly.

Nothing can account for their success in giving this fatal blow at the foundation of government, but that infatuating zeal which has blinded their own understandings, and which they have long employed to blind and deceive the minds of others. For many years past they have been extremely active and artful to increase the number of their proselytes, and to inflame their passions. They have imported, translated, circulated, and recommended a vast variety of publications which were designed to subvert all true principles in religion, morality, and politics, and to prepare the way for that Jacobinic liberty which is the last step to anarchy and confusion. They have zealously affected the populace, but not well. They have professed to be their best, their warmest, their only friends, to assist them "in regaining their lost liberty." They have flattered their vanity, by extolling their influence. They have courted their ambition, by hopes of preferment. They have gratified their avarice and licentiousness, by ample promises to lessen the burdens and to weaken the restraints of government. In short, they have been unwearied and incessant in their exertions to increase their numbers; and their success has been astonishing, especially about the time of the last election of President, and the last election of members of Congress. There was certainly some strange and invisible influence used to

make proselytes to their then prosperous cause. They then gave most striking manifestations of their proselyting spirit, which is one of the most infallible marks of false zeal.

Having gained the superiority in numbers and in power, their zeal has lately put on the appearance of triumph, oppression, and cruelty. Instead of courting and proselyting the minority, they treat them with every mark of neglect, insult, and severity. Publicly renouncing the common principles of prudence, propriety, and justice, they pursue their own revolutionizing scheme, with an ardor and impetuosity exceeding all expectations but their own. It was expected that they would suffer men of ability and fidelity to retain their places, and fill only vacant offices with men after their own heart. It was expected that they would profess at least to pay some respect to some other qualifications for office than merely that of a flaming zeal to destroy civil and religious order. It was expected that those who were invested with executive and legislative power would have fulfilled their promises to favor the poor instead of the rich; to diminish and not increase the emoluments of office; to strengthen and not to weaken the bands of union and harmony; to defend and not to attack the federal constitution; and in a word, to use their power with peculiar moderation and caution. But they have completely disappointed all these favorable expectations. Their blind and infatuating zeal has hurried them on to hurl the best men out of office in order to make room for the worst; to lighten the burdens of the rich in order to increase the burdens of the poor; to feed their friends and starve their enemies; and to sap the foundation of the government which they had solemnly engaged to support and defend. This it is believed is a fair and just representation of their political conduct; and after comparing this with the marks which have been given of false zeal, can it be uncharitable or censorious to view and represent them as infatuated zealots, who are ardently pursuing a scheme which is calculated in its nature and tendency to destroy the nation?

It appears from the description which has been given of false zeal, that those who feel it and act under its influence are altogether criminal. It is the nature of this strong and ardent affection to stupify the conscience, and to darken its moral discernment of moral objects. While Paul was governed by false zeal, he verily thought that he was acting a virtuous and laudable part in opposing the cause of Christ, and in persecuting his humble and harmless followers. There is nothing which a false zeal will prompt men to do, but what it will equally prompt them to justify and applaud. But however

confident fierce and fiery zealots may be of the rectitude of their views and feelings, yet they are really sinful and displeasing in the sight of God, who looketh on the heart and cannot be deceived. Whatever men have a right to love, they have a right to love ardently: but whatever they have no right to love, they have no right to love ardently. It is always good, therefore, to be zealously affected in a good cause; but always evil to be zealously affected in a bad cause. As false zeal in all cases ultimately terminates in a selfish and sinful end; so it is always of a selfish and criminal nature, in proportion to the magnitude and importance of the objects against which it is pointed. It is criminal for a man to be zealously opposed to the good of his neighbor; it is more criminal for a man to be zealously opposed to the good of his country; and it is infinitely more criminal still to be opposed to the kingdom of Christ and the cause of christianity. All those, therefore, who are at this day zealously opposed to our civil and religious institutions, are altogether and aggravatedly criminal. The higher they rise in their unhallowed zeal, to destroy these most dear and valuable interests, the more they increase their guilt and expose themselves to the severest marks of divine displeasure. Though they may call themselves, and be called by others, noble and virtuous patriots, yet they do not appear so to God, and will not appear so to their own minds, when the fervor of their zeal is abated, and the fatal consequences of it are realized. It seems to be the opinion of many, that each of the parties in the present political controversy may be equally sincere and virtuous in their zealous efforts to carry on and accomplish their ultimate designs. But this is to suppose that there is no moral difference between seeking to promote a good, and seeking to promote a bad cause, or between seeking to save, and seeking to destroy our country. False zeal takes the most criminal directions when it points its whole force against true religion and good government. And it is not possible to conceive that there is any course of conduct in this world by which men can do so much mischief and contract so much guilt, as by zealously opposing these great interests for time and eternity. Hence,

3. False zeal is the most dangerous as well as the most criminal passion, that can possibly reign in the human heart. It steadily, ardently, and perseveringly pursues its selfish and destructive designs, without regarding the force of reason or moral restraint. It forms men for the most desperate enterprises, and prepares them to employ all their powers in opposition to the best interests of the public. It has done more mischief to mankind, from age to age, than all the hurricanes, earth-

quakes, and conflagrations with which they have been afflicted. It has been the primary source of innumerable murders, massacres, persecutions, conspiracies, revolutions, wars and desolations, among the nations of the earth. A single spark of false zeal may spread from the breast of one popular influential character, through a whole nation, and involve them in the heaviest calamities. Of this we have a late and memorable instance. About a half a century ago, the malignant heart of Voltaire swelled with impetuous zeal to crush christianity and all its votaries. From him the flame spread among his learned friends; from these it spread among the French philosophers and nobility; and from these it spread among a vast number of secret societies in France, in Germany, and in several other parts of Europe. In this rapid progress, it employed a thousand pens and ten thousand tongues to plead its cause, and proselyte millions to atheistical and skeptical infidelity. Strengthened and encouraged by their numbers, these zealots pointed their virulence against the throne as well as the altar, which spread anarchy and destruction through France, and involved a great part of Europe, Egypt and Syria, in all the terrors and miseries of a long and cruel war.* Such have been the genuine fruits of false zeal in our own day; and such we have reason to believe, it will continue to produce, wherever it rages without restraint. Its present appearance and prevalence in America, therefore, raises a dark cloud over our happy country, and presents a threatening and an alarming prospect. Our zealots have imbibed the very spirit of Frenchmen, and seem determined to pursue the same object which France with all her zeal has finally lost. This appears both from the profession and conduct of our former Jacobins and present Republicans. They have openly and uniformly approved of the measures of the French, in all their political turnings and windings, until they lost their hopes, and bowed their necks to the yoke of monarchy and absolute despotism. And notwithstanding they have seen the fatal consequences of European democracy and infidelity, they are still engaged to spread these worst of evils as far as possible. Their late suc-

* From June 17, 1789 to October, 1795, the number of slain and banished in France amounted to 2,152,979. Among these were 1,454 priests, put to death, and 28,729 banished. Since that period have elapsed five years of internal revolutions and foreign wars, carried on with infinite waste and havoc, in the Netherlands, along the Rhine, in Swabia, in Switzerland, in the Pyrenian frontiers of Spain, in every part of Italy, in Egypt, and in Syria. How many thousands of English, Prussians, Austrians, Dutch, Spaniards, Italians, and Saracens, either soldiers or subjects, must be added to the list of Frenchmen, whose lives, property, and happiness have been the victims of this mighty revolution! — *New York Magazine and American Review*, Vol. 2.

cess has enlivened their hopes and increased their exertions to finish the demoralizing and disorganizing work, which lies so near their hearts. And who can believe that they will now either relax their efforts or relinquish their designs, unless some insurmountable obstacle is thrown in their way? "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may they also do good, that are accustomed to do evil." There is nothing too bad for those to perpetrate, who are governed by a blind, deaf, and furious zeal. Let this spirit continue and increase for a few years to come, as it has done for two or three years past, and would it be strange should the same dreadful scenes be realized in America, which have been realized in France? If the same causes, under similar circumstances, will produce similar effects; then the friends of religion and government have every thing to fear from the prevailing spirit of the times.

Permit me now, my hearers, to address you freely upon the present alarming state of our country. I would by no means excite in your minds any groundless fears, nor inflame them with that spurious zeal, which it is the design of this discourse to expose and reprobate. But I ardently wish to awaken your attention to your real danger, and to urge upon you the importance of using every proper method to prevent the dire calamities which threaten our nation with ruin.

It is highly proper and necessary, at present, to beware of those, "who zealously affect you, but not well," and to place no confidence in their warm professions of friendship, humanity and patriotism. Can you believe that those are friendly to you who are unfriendly to religion? Can you believe that those are friendly to religion who deny the existence of the Deity, disbelieve the divinity of the scriptures, neglect public worship, profane the Sabbath, and reproach the whole body of the clergy? Can you believe that those are sincere friends to the peace and harmony of the nation, who use every method to please one party and to displease the other? Can you believe the sincerity of their public declaration, in saying, "We are all federalists, we are all republicans," when they know we widely differ in our political sentiments? We are so far from being all republicans in their sense of the term, that it is very doubtful whether there be a single republican among Americans, who has not lately become so by renouncing his old, and adopting a new political creed. It is absurd to suppose that the people in general are republicans, since they have always lived under a different form of government. Before the Revolution there was not a single republican government in America. The government in each state was mixed, and composed of

three distinct branches, which were designed to be mutual checks. And when the federal constitution was framed, the framers meant to guard against the very form of government, which the republicans now plead for and wish to introduce. They plead for a pure democracy, which places the whole power in one body of rulers, who are under no restraint from any other civil body, and who may make and unmake laws and constitutions every day in the year, and every hour in the day. It is so far from being true, therefore, that the majority of the people are republicans, that they are by habit, by tradition, by the federal constitution, and by their love of order and religion, real federalists. Be not deceived by the artifice of the republicans, who at one breath pronounce us entirely united, and at the next, totally disunited in sentiment. The truth is, republicans are a new political sect lately risen up in America, who derive their notions of government from Turgot, Condorcet, Thomas Paine, Needham, or some other politicians of the same cast. Their sentiments are diametrically opposite to the first principles of the federal constitution; and therefore they cannot be sincerely attached to it. Have we then any ground to believe that they are sincere, when they tell us that they are the best or only friends to our excellent constitution? Can such a profession be intended to answer any other purpose than to make us believe that all their peculiar zeal has been and is still pointed against men and measures only, and not against the very existence of our civil and religious institutions? Be assured, federalists are friendly and republicans are unfriendly to our general government; and notwithstanding the republicans zealously affect you, yet remember that they are not federalists, that they are not friendly to federalists, and that they are seeking to destroy that very government which federalists are seeking to preserve and establish. The republicans would lose all their power of proselyting, if the people would only open their eyes and view their sentiments and spirit in a true light. Let us therefore endeavor to undeceive those who are deceived, and in this way effectually check the farther spread of false zeal.

In the next place, it is our immediate duty to cherish in ourselves and others the spirit of true zeal in opposition to false. Our enemies have long been exercising and promoting a false zeal, by which they have done wonders, and brought us to the brink of ruin. This consideration ought to awaken in our breasts the spirit of true zeal in our own defence. We have good reasons to be zealous. Our most important interests lie at stake. We have long enjoyed the gospel in its purity and simplicity, and been allowed to worship our Maker in the way

most agreeable to the dictates of our consciences. We have lived under a government most favorable to public peace, safety and happiness. We know by experience the inestimable blessings of true religion and good government. We must be therefore extremely stupid and criminal, if we tamely suffer ourselves to be stripped of all our great and distinguishing privileges, by the arts and intrigues of false zeal. It is always good to be zealously affected in a good cause. Our cause is the best in which we can possibly be engaged. The defence of our religion and government calls for our most zealous exertions. We need only to realize the magnitude and importance of our national interests, to inflame our zeal in our country's cause. Let us turn our own attention, and if possible, the attention of others, to these great objects, which are the best suited to inflame the mind with a truly noble, benevolent, patriotic zeal. There is nothing so directly calculated to strike terror and despair into the hearts of our enemies, as the appearance and prevalence of true zeal among the great body of our steady, judicious, and honest citizens, who sincerely desire the continuance of just such a government, and just such a religion, as they have heretofore always enjoyed. Could this class of men only be convinced that their professed friends are their most dangerous enemies, who are seeking to rob them of every thing they hold most dear and sacred, their zeal would be enkindled against their deceivers, and make them tremble for their past conduct. And it is encouraging to reflect, that the spirit of true zeal begins to appear and operate in various parts of the Union, where false zeal has long borne down all before it. The deceived begin to open their eyes and discern their danger. Wherever we discover a spark of true zeal, let us cherish it; and there is good ground to hope that true zeal will become more universal and more powerful than false. At the present crisis there is nothing more proper, more necessary, and more effectual to be done, than to enkindle the fire of true zeal through the country, and turn the just indignation of the people against those who would rob them of the richest blessings of time and eternity.

The subject and the occasion now call upon us to lament before God the uncommon prevalence of false zeal. This is our national iniquity, for which God may righteously visit us with the severest national calamities. Instead of being zealous to do good, we have been zealous to do evil. Instead of being zealous for the glory of God, the interests of religion, and the prosperity of the nation, we have been zealous to abuse and misimprove our most distinguishing and important blessings. Our zeal has been pointed against God, against Christ,

against the Bible, against divine institutions, and against all civil, moral, and religious restraints. Such a blind and flaming zeal to break over all the laws of God and man, must be extremely criminal, and loudly call for humiliation and self-abasement. We are a "sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil doers, children that are corrupters: we have forsaken the Lord; we have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger; we are gone away backward." "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed." Let us sigh and cry for all that false zeal which has burned in our breasts, or in the breasts of others, and which has been infinitely offensive to God. Our national guilt will become our personal guilt, unless we sincerely lament it. Let us rend our hearts and not our garments, and return unto the Lord by true repentance, that iniquity may not be our ruin.

With these feelings let us look to God, who governs the moral as well as the natural world, to display his power and grace for our deliverance. He restrained the false zeal of Esau from injuring his brother. He restrained the false zeal of Pharaoh from destroying his chosen people. He subdued the false zeal of Paul, and made him as warm a friend as he had been a bitter enemy to the cause of Christ. He still has the entire dominion over the hearts of rulers and subjects, and can turn them whithersoever he pleases, as the rivers of water are turned. He can turn the most zealous infidel into a zealous believer. He can turn the enemies of their country into sincere and zealous patriots. He can save our nation from foreign wars and internal tumults and convulsions. He can disperse the dark clouds which hang over us, and establish us in the full and lasting enjoyment of all our civil and religious privileges. Let us trust in the Lord, in whom there is everlasting strength; and who has assured us that the wrath of man shall praise him, and the remainder of wrath he will restrain. Amen.

SERMON XV.

AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE.

JULY 5, 1802.

This day shall be unto you for a memorial. — Ex. xii. 14.

Nothing can be more correspondent with the joyful occasion upon which we are convened than this passage of divine inspiration. It contains the express command of God to his ancient people to commemorate every year the auspicious day of their national independence. From a single family, in the course of about four hundred years they rose into a numerous and independent nation. They were of the seed of Abraham in the line of Isaac and Jacob. The darling son of this pious patriarch was carried into Egypt, where he was raised to superior power, and where he became the happy instrument of preserving his father's family, who rapidly increased to a numerous people. During the life of Joseph, his infant nation was extremely prosperous and happy; but some time after his death they found themselves in a very wretched condition. There arose a king in Egypt who knew not Joseph, and who attempted to diminish the growing population and strength of the children of Israel. Among other arbitrary acts, he set over them certain officers who treated them with intolerable rigor and severity. But the more they sighed, and groaned, and complained, the more they were oppressed by their unfeeling masters. At length the God of Israel heard their groanings, and raised up a deliverer. Moses was born, and providentially preserved, educated, and prepared to execute the gracious design of Heaven. God vouchsafed to speak to him

face to face, and gave him authority to go to the king of Egypt and demand deliverance for his chosen people. Though diffident and reluctant, he accepted the divine appointment, and undertook his important and arduous work. He repeatedly applied to Pharaoh, and repeatedly met with a repulse; but being clothed with divine authority and miraculous power, he brought such a series of sore and wasting judgments upon him and his subjects that he finally gave his full consent that the people of God should leave his kingdom and return to the country from which they came. This was the joyful day of their independence: and this day God appointed as a standing memorial of that great and happy event.

The causes and circumstances which concurred to bring about the independence of the Israelites are so similar to the causes and circumstances which concurred to bring about the American revolution, that we may justly conclude there is a peculiar propriety in commemorating the birth-day of our national existence. Many instances might be adduced from scripture to illustrate this conclusion. God sanctified the Sabbath for a memorial of the great work of creation. He appointed the bow in the clouds for a memorial of his preserving mercy to Noah and his family in the midst of a perishing world. He ordained that the pot of manna and Aaron's rod which budded should be kept as perpetual tokens of his special kindness and awful justice. He likewise commanded his people, whom he conducted through Jordan upon dry ground, to take stones from the bottom of the river and raise a lasting monument of that miraculous interposition in their favor. Justly reasoning from such instances as these, Mordecai, with the express approbation of Esther the queen, appointed the days of Purim to commemorate the great deliverance of the Jews from the hand of Haman. Each of these cases exactly applies to the case before us, and completely illustrates the propriety of commemorating the day upon which we took the rank and claimed the character of a free and independent nation.

But what I farther propose in the present discourse, is to point out some of the important purposes which may be answered by keeping up the remembrance of this great and interesting event.

First, it must have a tendency to give us a realizing sense of the overruling hand of God in all that takes place in the moral as well as in the natural world. While we observe the common course of nature, which is no other than the common course of Providence, in producing similar effects in a similar manner, from day to day and from year to year, we are extremely prone to lose a realizing sense of that invisible hand

which governs all natural causes and moral agents. But when God comes out of his place, and shakes kingdoms and nations by sudden and unexpected revolutions, we are constrained to awake from our stupidity, and "to know that he is the Lord," who governs the world. The visible manifestation of his overruling hand in such uncommon and extraordinary events, strikes us with a strong conviction that others, more common and ordinary, are equally under his constant and controlling influence. Nothing is more easy and familiar to our minds, than to trace causes into all the variety and multiplicity of their effects. When we recollect and contemplate any great and unusual event, we naturally conclude, not only that the hand of God was in that, but in every other event which appears to have been intimately or remotely connected with it. Who can contemplate and realize the hand of God in the work of creation, without realizing his hand in upholding and governing the world from that day to this? Who can contemplate and realize the hand of God in the destruction of Pharaoh and the redemption of Israel, without realizing that he governs the kingdoms of men, and gives them to whomsoever he will? Hence a standing memorial of that great event was wisely calculated to give the people of God a realizing sense of his universal providence. Accordingly he directed them, when they celebrated the day of their deliverance, to rehearse in the ears of their children the evils they suffered and the scenes they saw in the land of Egypt; and to recount the great and distinguishing blessings which flowed from that memorable interposition of Providence in their favor. This could hardly fail of causing both them and their children to acknowledge and realize the hand of God in all events.

The same important purpose may be answered, by keeping alive the remembrance of the eventful day of our national independence. The hand of God was clearly displayed in preparing the way, in raising up the instruments, and supplying the means, for the American Revolution. Though no miracles were wrought in our favor, as in the case of Israel, yet those in the cabinet and those in the field were favored with the peculiar smiles and influence of Heaven. And though the armies of our enemies were not plunged in the mighty ocean, yet they were one after another, by a remarkable concurrence of causes, delivered into our hands. Who then can either recollect or contemplate the commencement of our independence, without realizing the hand of God in that great event, and in the surprising train of consequences which have flowed from it? If any thing can prevent the general spread of atheism and infidelity in this favored land, it seems the commemorating the

day of our national preservation and independence is calculated to produce the desirable effect. This is one very valuable purpose to be answered, by recognizing the hand of God in making us a distinct and independent nation.

Secondly, the recalling to remembrance the auspicious day of our separation from Great Britain, is suited to fill our hearts with gratitude for all the public and private, civil and religious, blessings which we now enjoy. A stream of every kind of knowledge, and a stream of every kind of wealth, has been flowing in upon us in consequence of our assuming a national character. Our independence has not only enlarged our borders to a vast extent, but also opened a free intercourse with all the commercial world. Our wealth and knowledge are not only doubled, but the means of increasing these are ten-fold increased. We have, perhaps, more extensive and promising prospects before us, than any other people on the globe. And though at present a thick and dark cloud is hovering over us, yet there is reason to believe that the blessings of our independence will extend and increase to the latest generations. Now, all these blessings in enjoyment and in prospect may be traced up to that memorable day which gave us an independent station among the nations of the earth. And in contemplating the great goodness of God, in such a signal interposition in our favor, we are prepared to discern his loving kindness and tender mercy in all the happy fruits which we have long been reaping from it. It must be, therefore, both pleasing and useful, to preserve and perpetuate the memory of our national birth-day, which has produced and still promises so much benefit to this western world.

Thirdly, there is another good purpose to be answered, by the frequent recollection of the day which disconnected us from the British parliament; and that is, to teach us how to support and preserve our own excellent government, which we have happily adopted in consequence of that disconnection. To illustrate the truth of this observation, you will permit me to unfold, in the most conspicuous manner, the governing motives and fundamental principles which conspired to bring about our separation from Great Britain. These things, of late years, have been greatly misunderstood by some, and greatly misrepresented by others. I will endeavor, therefore, to set these points in a true and clear light.

It has been justly observed by a judicious and elegant author, "that our independence was found by those who sought it not." At the commencement of our controversy with the mother country, we had not the least desire nor intention of becoming independent. We had no objection against the peculiar form

of the British government. We highly approved and admired it. All our complaints arose from its corrupt administration. We justly supposed that those in power were arbitrary and unconstitutional, in presuming to tax us without our consent, for the purpose of raising a national revenue, from which we were to derive no part of the benefit. This we viewed as unjust and oppressive, because it was promoting the interest of one part of the nation, at the expense and injury of the other. To avoid this unreasonable burden, which for aught we knew might be increased from year to year and from age to age, we complained and remonstrated; and finally petitioned to be exempted from taxation, upon the ground of having no representation in the British parliament. This indulgence we could not obtain by these means, and therefore we resolved to use others. Accordingly, we presumed to exercise our original and independent right to suspend our commercial intercourse with Great Britain. This was considered by the mother country as undutiful and refractory conduct; which drew upon us greater oppression, and finally the charge of rebellion. We were then constrained to take up arms in our own defence. But still we were ready to lay them down, on condition that Britain would relinquish her claim to tax us in all cases whatsoever without our consent. So that for some time after the war commenced, we had no thoughts of declaring independence; or if any did think of it, they thought of it as a case of necessity, not of choice. Hence it clearly appears, that it was solely owing to the arbitrary measures of the British parliament, that we formed and executed the resolution of becoming a separate and independent people.

It is now easy to ascertain what were not, as well as what were, the fundamental principles of our late revolution. They were not the principles of a pure monarchy; for we did not wish to place all civil power in one man's hand. They were not the principles of a pure aristocracy; for we saw no safety in committing all civil power to a nobility, or to the hands of a few rich and great men. They were not the principles of a pure democracy; for we foresaw the danger of lodging all civil power in the hands of one large body, or popular assembly. What then were the fundamental principles of the revolution? The true and proper answer is, they were the principles of a mixed and duly balanced government, composed of three distinct orders or branches. Of the truth of this assertion we have the most plain and incontestable evidence. At the time of the declaration of independence, there was not a single monarchy, aristocracy, or democracy, in the thirteen United States. In every State, a mixed government was established,

consisting of a Governor, a body of Senators or assistants, and a House of Representatives. And until the federal constitution was adopted, all the State governments were entirely distinct, without any other bond of union than that of a confederation. From these facts it is evident that the continental congress, when they declared the United States independent, adopted no new principles, and established no new form of government. They meant only to dissolve the connection between Great Britain and these colonies, and leave the latter in the full enjoyment of the same liberty and order, which they had long before enjoyed. Nothing was farther from their intention, than to introduce a loose, wild, frantic democracy, which should free the people from all restraint, and set them all upon a level. In every instance, in which this democratic spirit appeared, our wisest and best men bore a bold and public testimony against it. When any insurrection arose in this or any other State in the Union, it was immediately and effectually suppressed, by the arm of government. Neither our rulers, nor the sober and judicious part of our citizens, had the least idea of modern liberty and equality. This was more fully demonstrated, when some of our best informed civilians met in convention, to frame the federal constitution. They were all united in the opinion, that a mixed government, composed of three branches as checks upon each other, was absolutely the best. Accordingly they framed such a mixed and duly balanced government, and recommended it to the acceptance of the people, who actually adopted it. And here it is worthy of particular notice, that some of the same men, who were principally concerned in the Declaration of Independence, were also principally concerned in forming the federal constitution. It may suffice to mention JOHN ADAMS and BENJAMIN FRANKLIN, who subscribed both the Declaration of Independence and the constitution of the federal government. The public conduct of these men, in bringing about the revolution, and in forming the federal constitution, and of one of them in administering it, together with the public conduct of the majority of the nation, affords infallible evidence, that the fundamental principles of the Revolution were no other than the principles of a mixed government, which bears the nearest resemblance to the British constitution. All the political publications previous to and in favor of the Revolution, which I have had opportunity of reading, except the "Crisis" of Thomas Paine, maintain the principles of a free, firm, mixed government. The American people never professed to embrace the democratic principles of Needham, Turgot, Condorcet, and Thomas Paine; but have been almost universally in favor of the prin-

ciples which lie at the foundation of the federal constitution. These are the pure, genuine principles of the Revolution; and these are the only sound principles of civil government, which ought to be kept in perpetual remembrance. In this view and to answer this purpose, a standing memorial of our independence is not only proper, but very useful and important. If we ever forget or renounce the principles of the Revolution, we shall certainly subject ourselves to the great evils of either monarchy, aristocracy, or democracy. To the last mentioned evils, we seem at present to be most immediately exposed. It has now, therefore, become necessary to look back to the fundamental principles of the Revolution. These are the proper criterion to determine, whether those in administration are pursuing measures to support or to destroy the general government. There is no step better calculated, perhaps, to preserve and perpetuate all our civil and religious privileges, than to recognize, vindicate, and transmit to future ages, the grand and fundamental principles, upon which we declared our independence, and built our federal constitution. This, if any thing, must eventually restore peace and harmony to the present professedly united but actually divided States. Could we only agree to adopt the very principles of our independence, there is scarcely a doubt, but that we should soon have such men in administration, as would render the government acceptable to the people in general, and formidable to all foreign powers. Thus it appears, that a frequent recollection of the day of our national independence, may have a happy tendency to teach us our dependence upon God, our obligations to him, and the importance of maintaining the free and efficient government, which we still enjoy, but are in danger of losing.

A few pertinent and just deductions from what has been said shall now close the discourse.

This subject clearly shows us in the first place, why we conducted our revolution with so much more moderation and success than the French conducted theirs. At their first setting out to obtain civil and religious freedom, we generally supposed in this country that they intended to tread in our steps and imitate our example, which led us to applaud and patronize their zealous exertions; but they have long since given us abundant evidence of our egregious and dangerous mistake. Their political principles and ultimate designs were subversive of all civil and religious order. Instead of merely seeking to free themselves from oppression, and to ameliorate their own government, their grand object was, to introduce universal democracy, and involve the world in anarchy and confusion. They were as much opposed to the principles of our revolu-

tion as to the principles of the British government, which they strenuously endeavored to overturn. Condorcet, who was one of the first and ablest friends to their revolution, and who wrote in favor of it, expressly says, the Americans are far behind the French in political knowledge; and to support his assertion appeals to our federal constitution, which is built upon the principles of a mixed government, composed of three orders. In opposition to this, he maintained *that* to be the best form of government which consists of one body, or a pure democracy; and so did the other French writers in favor of their revolution. Hence it is evident that the French revolution was begun and carried on for a long time upon democratic principles, which were entirely different from the sound principles of the American revolution. And it was owing to such democratic principles that they furiously went on making and unmaking one constitution after another, and spreading misery and destruction among themselves and among surrounding and distant nations, until Bonaparte gave them a constitution which they found they could not so easily alter. The French acted from motives and principles which had a direct tendency to destroy all religion and government; but we acted from motives and principles which were friendly to all the civil and religious rights of mankind. Accordingly our revolution produced a free and efficient government; but theirs produced in the first instance perfect licentiousness, and in the last, absolute tyranny. Every one therefore who really approves of the revolution in America, must really abhor the revolution in France.

What has been said may, in the next place, enable us to determine with a great degree of certainty who are the only friends to our present federal constitution. All parties, indeed, profess to be friends to the constitution, whether they approve or disapprove of the measures of those who are immediately concerned in the administration of government. But if what has been said be just, we have a standard by which to try the political sentiments of every man in every political party among us. It has been observed, that the fundamental principles of the American revolution were neither the principles of mere monarchy, nor of mere aristocracy, nor of mere democracy, but those of a mixed and duly balanced government. None therefore can be real friends to the constitution who do not approve of the principles of the revolution. And according to this criterion, neither monarchists, nor aristocrats, nor democrats, nor republicans, are friends to the constitution; but only federalists, who have uniformly approved and supported the principles of the revolution, which are the principles of a mixed government. Let there be ever so many parties

among us, they are all, except federalists, sentimentally opposed to the constitution, and would, if they had the power, destroy it. If there be any monarchists among us, they would give all power to the president, which would destroy the constitution. If there be any aristocrats among us, they would take away all power from the president and representatives, and give it to the senate, which would destroy the constitution. If there be any republicans among us, who differ in sentiment from all other parties, they would take away all power from the president, and senate, and representatives, which would destroy the constitution, and immediately introduce complete anarchy and confusion. But if there be any federalists among us, and I trust they are very numerous, they would have the powers which are already delegated to the president, senate, and representatives, forever remain in their hands, as proper checks to each other, which would effectually establish the constitution to the end of time. There is not, there cannot be any party among us, who are friendly to the constitution, but only those who are sentimentally federalists. To make this point if possible clearer still, let me call up to your view some of the most eminent federalists in the United States. President Washington lived and died a federalist. President Adams is the great patron of federalism. Pinckney, Pickering, and Ellsworth, are federalists. To name no more, Governors Jay, Strong, Trumbull, and Gilman, are federalists. Were not these celebrated federalists eminent and decided friends to the American revolution? Have they not since ably and zealously supported the great principles which led to that great event? Have they not been perfectly consistent in their principles and conduct? If all this be true, then real federalists are the only real friends to the present general government. All republicans, or all who differ in their political sentiments from federalists, have departed from the principles of the revolution, and maintain principles repugnant to the federal constitution; and if they act consistently, must pursue measures which ultimately tend to destroy it.

But, thirdly, it is a just conclusion from what has been said, that the people in general throughout the United States are in sentiment real federalists. They have been born and educated under governments founded upon right principles. They have approved of the Declaration of Independence. They have adopted the federal constitution. They have, for a dozen years together, experienced the happy effects of its operation. These circumstances must convince every impartial mind, that the great majority of our citizens do really approve the sound principles of federalism. I know, indeed, there is a very large number, who glory in the name of republicans, and really

think they are not federalists. But to what is this owing? It cannot be owing to their education, nor to their long habits of thinking, nor to their adopting the principles of the revolution, nor to their change of sentiments; but it must be principally if not altogether owing to misinformation. They have been told, that republicans are friends, and federalists are enemies, to the constitution of the federal government. Taking this to be a fair and just representation of the two principal parties, many honest and virtuous citizens choose to join the republicans, whom they view as the sincere supporters of the federal constitution, which they ardently desire may be firmly maintained and established. All these men are true federalists, while they think and call themselves republicans. They ought to be viewed in their true light, and numbered among the friends of their country. There is no doubt but they will soon appear so. The eyes of some begin to be opened, and they begin to perceive, that the republicans are the real enemies of the constitution, and determined to destroy it; while the federalists are its true friends, and determined to support it. This is a truth which all honest and well-meaning republicans will soon discover; and the discovery will prompt them to appear openly on the side of uniform consistent federalists. The federal party is increasing, and the republican party is diminishing; and in all probability, the time is not far remote, when none will appear to be republicans, but those who have renounced the principles of the American, and adopted the principles of the French revolution. And if all the people in America were now to be distinguished according to this criterion, who can believe, that one in ten ought to be called a republican? The truth is, all the American people, except a few individuals who have been corrupted by French politics, are sentimentally federalists.

Permit me to observe, in the last place, that this anniversary properly belongs to the federalists, who ought to improve it, in promoting the best interests of their country. It is presumption in republicans to claim this day as their own. They are the men, who have uniformly applauded and justified the French revolution in all its turnings and windings, and who still pant after French liberty and equality. Can they have any just pretence to celebrate the American revolution? No; they are apostates from the true principles of the revolution, and of consequence, apostates from our federal government. It is absurd in the extreme, for their orators, on this day consecrated to commemorate the best moral, religious, and political principles, to trumpet the corrupt principles of democracy, anarchy, infidelity, and atheism, through our enlightened and well-indoctri-

nated nation. Let true federalists expose such bare-faced abuse of this memorial of our national independence; and convert it to its proper end, which is to promote our national prosperity and happiness.

It is a part of the proper business of this anniversary, to enlighten the people into the pure principles of our federal constitution. If they could only be convinced, that our general government is founded upon the principles of our late revolution, almost every man would be entirely satisfied. All seem to be agreed, that all our politicians who brought about the revolution were true patriots, and meant to secure the rights and liberties of the people. If, therefore, the people in general could only be made to see with their own eyes, that these true patriots, who brought about the revolution, acted upon the same principles in forming and administering the federal government, all their groundless fears and complaints of the federalists would instantly cease. Let them improve, therefore, the happy opportunity which this anniversary affords them, to diffuse this necessary and useful instruction among the people at large; that they may duly appreciate, as well as cheerfully obey, the excellent government under which they live.

It is also very proper, on this anniversary, to examine the measures of those in the administration of government. They are liable, through ignorance or design, to commit great mistakes; and it belongs to the people to scrutinize their conduct, and prevent the subversion of the constitution, which is the grand palladium of their liberties. All our rulers in the federal government ought to be tried by the standard of the federal constitution. If they violate any of its fundamental principles, in the laws they make or the acts they pass, they stand condemned for the abuse of power. It is in the scale of the constitution they ought to be weighed; and if in that scale they are found wanting, they ought either to be dropped from office, or suffer some severer mark of public displeasure. If attempts have been made, of late, to warp our constitution, and by destroying its checks and balances, turn it into a monarchy or democracy, these attempts ought to be viewed as unconstitutional and arbitrary. Now, therefore, is the time to awaken the vigilance of all the true friends of their country, and excite them to guard and defend that excellent government, which cost them so much blood and treasure to obtain. This day calls to remembrance the bloody scenes of the late revolution, when the flower of our nation perished in the defence of their laws and religion; and when the die was cast by the Declaration of Independence, whether we should live as freemen, or die as rebels. If we only keep our eyes fixed upon the prin-

ciples of the revolution, which were wrought into the very essence of our general government, we may easily determine, from time to time, whether our rulers pursue measures, which ought to alarm our fears, and rouse our exertions to defend our civil and religious liberties. Let us apply the rule; let us judge with impartiality; and let us eventually act as wisdom and duty shall dictate.

Above all, let us this day place an unshaken confidence in God, amidst all the dark and threatening aspects of our public affairs. Though our nation is divided into parties; though the wheels of government drag heavily; and though the very foundations of civil and religious order begin to tremble; yet let us realize and confide in that divine over-ruling hand, which conducted us through the storms and tempests of the late revolution, which established our present government, and which is still able to strengthen and preserve it. It is easy for God to raise up instruments and devise means for our public safety; and to avert the dreadful calamities which seem ready to overwhelm us. Let us this day set up our "Ebenezer, saying, Hitherto hath the Lord helped us." And while we gratefully recognize the wonders of his past goodness towards our rising nation, let us humbly hope that he will not cast us off; but for his name's sake, make us both holy and happy, under the influence of his holy spirit, and under the smiles of his powerful and watchful providence. Amen.

SERMON XVI.

RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTERS USEFUL TO CIVIL SOCIETY.

ANNUAL FAST, APRIL 7, 1803.

BUT Jehoiada waxed old, and was full of days when he died; an hundred and thirty years old was he when he died. And they buried him in the city of David among the kings, because he had done good in Israel, both toward God, and toward his house. — 2 CHRON. xxiv. 15, 16.

THIS venerable priest lived a long and useful life. He spent all his days in promoting the cause of God and the good of civil society. By a faithful discharge of the duties of his sacred office, during six successive reigns, he exercised a powerful influence over the hearts and consciences of both rulers and subjects, and in that way governed their public and private conduct. It is said, "Joash did that which was right in the sight of the Lord all the days of Jehoiada the priest." And it appears from the representation in the text, that all classes of the people in the kingdom were deeply sensible of the great benefit which they had derived from his public labors and instructions. For "they buried him in the city of David, among the kings, because he had done good in Israel." Some have conjectured that these words were a part of an epitaph put upon his tomb; but whether they were or were not, they express the high sense which the nation entertained of his eminent usefulness in his sacred profession. There is nothing singular in this ancient opinion concerning the utility and importance of religious instructers; for the same sentiment has generally prevailed in all ages of the world. Accordingly, this will be the leading idea in the present discourse: That it has been the common opinion of mankind, that religious instructers are very useful in civil society.

To set this subject in a clear light, it will be proper to show in the first place, that this has been the common opinion of mankind; and in the next place make it appear that this opinion is well founded.

I. Let us consider the common opinion of mankind, respecting the usefulness of religious instructers, in civil society.

We may easily learn the opinion of the world upon this subject, by their uniform and immemorial practice. The Jews have always had an order of men, to teach the duties and perform the ceremonies of their religion. And though christians have been greatly divided in their religious sentiments and modes of public worship, yet they have universally agreed to support religious teachers. If we now turn our thoughts to the heathen world, we shall find that they have all gone into the same practice. The Egyptians were the first, or next to the first nation, who formed themselves into civil society, and laid themselves under the restraints of civil government. And as early as the days of Joseph, they certainly had religious instructers among them, who were treated with peculiar marks of respect. The sacred historian tells us, that when the seven years' famine prevailed in the land to such an extremity that the people in general were constrained to sell their persons as well as their property to procure sustenance, the priests were exempted, and "had a portion assigned them of Pharaoh, and did eat their portion which Pharaoh gave them." Profane history assures us that the Babylonians, Persians, Greeks and Romans, all had their teachers of religion. And when Julius Cæsar first carried his arms into Britain, he there discovered the Druids, who were considered and treated as a sacred order of men by the Britons. Nor do we find by the best accounts, that there is at this day a nation on earth, who have not some form of religion, and some men to perform religious offices. Now this immemorial and universal practice of mankind, in maintaining religious teachers, is a strong evidence that they have considered them as very useful in civil society. For no nation have ever been so much attached to their religion, that they would be willing to sacrifice their temporal interests to support it. All civil communities, therefore, in maintaining religious instructers, have always acted upon the principle that they are a body of men really useful and necessary in civil society. If any people viewed their religious teachers as useless or burdensome, they would either suppress, or banish, or destroy them. This has been sufficiently demonstrated by the late conduct of a great nation, who, in a day of infatuation, looked upon their priests as a burden to society, and who accordingly either banished or destroyed the whole order. Human nature

has been the same in all ages and in all nations. They never would, therefore, have suffered religious instructers to live among them, and much less have respected and supported them, if they had not really considered them as instrumental of promoting their interest in this, as well as in a future state. This general practice of mankind speaks louder than words; and proclaims it to have been their general opinion, from the earliest antiquity to the present day, that those who teach the doctrines and duties of religion are useful in civil society.

The next and principal thing proposed is,

II. To make it appear that this common opinion of mankind, respecting religious instructers, is well founded.

The common opinion of the world is generally just. They seldom form a wrong judgment of those things which come under their own observation and experience. It is hardly conceivable that they should be united, for ages, in any sentiment which is not founded in truth. It is true, that in arts and sciences the mass of mankind are not competent judges; but in respect to the character and conduct and influence of any set or order of men, with whom they are intimately acquainted, they are capable of forming a just and impartial opinion. They may know by experience whether they have derived advantage or disadvantage, from their public professional employment. There have been in all ages those who practiced the healing art; and though mankind have often suffered by the ignorance and presumption of the unskilful, yet taking the whole profession together, they have always agreed in opinion, that they are highly useful in every human society. The same general opinion has ever been entertained of civil rulers. Though some have cruelly oppressed and tyrannized over their subjects, yet no nation have disbanded, after forming into civil society, on account of the injustice, oppression, or tyranny of those, who have abused their usurped, or delegated power. This is an infallible evidence, that civil communities have always been agreed that civil rulers are of great importance to the public. And all nations have been as well agreed that religious instructers are useful in civil society; for they have as long and as universally approved and supported this order of men, as they have any other professional characters. There is, therefore, as good ground to conclude that their common opinion, in this case, is well founded, as in the case of physicians and civil rulers. In all these instances, they have formed their opinions upon the evidence of universal observation and experience. And if their opinions in these instances are wrong, how is it possible that they should ever be rectified? How can they have higher evidence against their opinions, than they have always had in fa-

vor of them? If the observation and experience of ages past have confirmed their opinions, how can future observation and experience refute them? This opinion, therefore, which mankind in all ages have formed, respecting the usefulness of religious instructers, rests upon a broad and firm foundation, which can never be shaken.

But, however just and conclusive this argument may be in favor of the truth under consideration, yet I shall chiefly insist on another, to be drawn from the duties which the ministers of religion ought to teach, and from the motives by which they ought to enforce all their religious instructions.

1. It belongs to those in the sacred office, to inculcate the duties which rulers owe to their subjects. When God first appointed civil magistrates, he prescribed their qualifications, and enjoined upon them a faithful discharge of the important trusts reposed in them. He directed his people, in the choice of their civil officers, "to provide able men, such as fear God; men of truth, hating covetousness." And he said by the mouth of David, "he that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God." Though he allows men to be clothed with civil power, and to bear the sword of justice; yet he does not release them from those moral obligations to obedience and fidelity in their elevated stations, which result from their relation to him, and to those whom they govern. He holds them responsible to himself, for all their public as well as private conduct; and he intends that they shall finally stand upon a level with the meanest of their subjects, before his supreme tribunal. He knows that all their powers to do good are equally powers to do evil; and of consequence, that they stand in peculiar need of divine precepts and prohibitions, to keep them in the path of duty, and to restrain them from abusing the authority with which they are invested. Accordingly, he expressly required the kings of Israel not only "to read the law of Moses all the days of their life, but also to write out a copy of it with their own hand; that they might learn to fear the Lord their God, and keep all the words of his law." Besides this, he frequently employed extraordinary as well as ordinary teachers, to pour religious instruction into the minds of the rulers of his people. Nathan, Elijah, Elisha, and other prophets, spent much of their time in warning and admonishing kings and princes in particular. And we find that the stated instructions of Jehoiada the priest had a most happy influence upon the life of Jehoash, the king of Judah. "And Jehoash did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, all the days wherein Jehoiada the priest *instructed* him." By this it appears, that religious instructers may do great and extensive service to a whole nation or kingdom, by

faithfully inculcating the duties of those, who are concerned in the administration of government.

2. It is the proper business of religious instructers to explain and enforce the duties which subjects owe to their rulers. The people are under indispensable obligations to respect and obey those in authority over them. And the apostle enjoins it upon ministers "to put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, and to be ready to every good work." This duty which he urged upon others, he performed himself, as appears from his solemn exhortation to subjects in the thirteenth of Romans. "Let every soul be subject to the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For he is the minister of God to thee for good. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience' sake. Render therefore to all their dues; tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor." All the ministers of religion ought to follow this example, and be equally plain and particular in urging upon subjects all the peculiar duties which they owe to those in authority, from the highest to the lowest. And can such religious instructions fail of strengthening the hands of civil rulers, and the cords of civil society?

3. The ministers of Christ ought to inculcate upon all their people every private as well as public duty. They are to call upon all men in every stage and condition of life, to repent and believe the gospel; and to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present evil world. They are not only to preach the great doctrines of the gospel, but also to inculcate all the christian graces and social virtues, which are the strongest cements of civil society. Mankind are linked together by a great variety of relations and connections, from which results as great a variety of correspondent and mutual duties. These, especially, come within the province of preachers to teach and inculcate. They are to explain and urge the mutual duties of husbands and wives, of parents and children, of brothers and sisters, of masters and servants, of the aged and the young, of the rich and the poor, of neighbors, friends, and enemies. The peace and happiness of every community greatly depends upon the strict and faithful discharge of those relative duties which lie beyond the

reach of all human authority. And, indeed, it is a matter of doubt, whether it would be possible for any portion of mankind to govern themselves by the mere force of civil laws without the aid of religious instructions, to regulate their views and conduct in their private and personal concerns. Religious instructers may, therefore, by teaching the doctrines of pure religion, and inculcating the relative and social duties of life, perform an essential service to society, which no other teachers can perform, and which no human laws can render useless or unnecessary. But it must be farther observed,

4. That it belongs to the ministers of the gospel, not only to teach all the duties of religion, morality, and humanity, but to enforce all their religious instructions by the most solemn and weighty motives. Though politicians and moralists may read fine lectures upon the public and private virtues, yet their best speculations upon these subjects are totally destitute of the force and obligation of religious discourses. It is the peculiar province of the ambassadors of God to address the hearts and consciences of men, and enforce their instructions by motives infinitely more powerful than any which can be drawn from human laws, or from the doctrines of true or false philosophy.

For, in the first place, they may enforce every doctrine and duty they teach, by all the weight and solemnity of the divine character. It belongs to their office to demonstrate the existence and display the glory and majesty of the great Creator. And there is something awfully sublime and solemn in the character of a self-existent and independent Being, whose power, wisdom, goodness, and justice, are beyond all comprehension. The fear of God is one of the most powerful restraints upon the feelings and actions of moral agents. They cannot realize his all-seeing and heart-searching eye, without a fear of doing any thing, either in public or secret, which they know will incur his displeasure. A sense of the divine presence restrained Joseph when and where no other motive could have had the least influence on his conduct. A fear of the divine disapprobation weighed heavier in the mind of Balaam than a house full of silver and gold. The awful appearance of Jehovah on Mount Sinai solemnized the minds and awakened the consciences of near three millions of people, and constrained them to resolve and promise that they would always be obedient to all his commands. Though the natural perfections of God are really terrible, yet his moral perfections make the deepest impressions on the human heart. While the preachers of the gospel, therefore, impress the minds of their hearers with a realizing sense of the existence of the Deity,

and of his infinite holiness and justice, it must give a peculiar force and energy to all their religious instructions.

In the next place, they may give weight and solemnity to their religious discourses, by motives drawn from the authority of the supreme Law-giver. All the divine precepts and prohibitions which they inculcate, are clothed with divine authority. God always speaks to men, in his word, as their absolute Lord and Sovereign. The duties which he enjoins upon rulers and subjects and all classes of men, have the sanction of all his authority, which is underived, independent and absolute. It necessarily arises from his being the author and owner of the universe, and from his possessing infinite power and absolute right to govern all his creatures and works. It is, therefore, infinitely superior to all human authority. Men derive all their authority from him; and, of course, the highest motive to obey their authority, arises from his command to obey it. It becomes the preachers of the gospel, therefore, not only to show the reasonableness of the divine precepts and prohibitions, but also their infinite authority to bind the consciences of all to obey. Indeed, God requires them to employ his infinite authority to give a sanction to the messages they deliver in his name. He said to Jeremiah, whom he sent to instruct both rulers and subjects, "Gird up thy loins, and arise, and speak unto them all that I command thee: be not dismayed at their faces, lest I confound thee before them. For, behold, I have made thee this day a defenced city, and an iron pillar, and brazen walls against the whole land—and they shall fight against thee, but they shall not prevail against thee: for I am with thee saith the Lord, to deliver thee." The authority of God gives a weighty and solemn sanction to all the messages which his faithful ministers deliver in his name. When they come with a "Thus saith the Lord," and admonish rulers and subjects of their danger and duty, the most stupid and hardened cannot despise and reject their instructions, without feeling themselves exposed to the severest marks of the divine displeasure.

The ambassadors of God may still farther enforce all the duties and doctrines they teach in his name, by his universal, overruling providence. He acts, and appears to act, as Lord of lords and King of kings, in his wise and holy government of the world. He rules in the kingdoms of men, and gives them to whomsoever he will. He stands in the congregation of the mighty, and judges among the gods. He confirms or confounds the counsels of the greatest potentates of the earth; who cannot, in a single instance, either stay his hand or defeat his designs. A consideration of such a constant and powerful influence of the Deity over all the views and designs and exer-

tions of men, serves to increase the force and obligation of religious instructions. Those, therefore, whose sacred office it is to proclaim to Zion "that her God reigneth," may give a heavy sanction to all they say to the friends and enemies of Zion, by displaying the power and operation of his invisible hand, who governs the concerns of all the kingdoms and nations of the earth.

Finally: the preachers of that gospel, which has brought life and immortality to light, may teach and warn and admonish their hearers, in the clear view of the glorious and awful retributions of eternity. God has expressly declared in his word, that he has appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness, and give to every man according to his work. All things are preparing, as fast as possible, for the day of judgment; when great and small, high and low, rich and poor, rulers and subjects, must all stand before the bar of Christ, who will lay open the secrets of all hearts, divide the righteous from the wicked, and close the solemn scene by admitting the righteous to everlasting life, and dooming the wicked to everlasting death. Knowing these terrors of the Lord, his ministers are solemnly bound to exhibit them before the minds of men in all their weight and solemnity, to persuade them to hear and obey the instructions of his word. The final and awful retributions of eternity, carry a weight and solemnity sufficient to penetrate and bow the stoutest heart. Paul tried their strength and prevailed. "As he reasoned of righteousness, temperance and judgment to come, Felix trembled."

These religious motives, which are drawn from the being and presence of the all-seeing and heart-searching God, from the infinite authority of all his precepts and prohibitions, from the controlling influence of his universal providence, and from the future and eternal rewards and punishments, which he will finally dispense to the righteous and the wicked, are infinitely superior to any other motives; which can be exhibited before reasonable and accountable creatures. They are calculated to affect and influence all the powers and faculties of their souls. They are equally adapted to enlighten their understandings, to bind their consciences, and to govern all their hopes and fears. And they carry the same infinite weight and authority to all men, at all times, in all places, and under all circumstances. Hence it clearly appears, that the business of religious teachers perfectly coincides with the business of civil rulers. It is the ultimate design of civil magistrates to restrain the external actions of men; and so far as religious teachers restrain their internal corruptions, just so far they aid the civil powers, and contribute all their influence to promote the good of civil society. This salutary

effect of religious instruction, enforced by the motives of eternity, mankind have observed and experienced in all ages; and upon this solid ground, they have formed their united and just opinion, that religious instructers are highly necessary to promote their civil as well as religious interests.

This subject naturally suggests a number of important truths, which deserve serious consideration at the present day.

1. Since men in all ages have generally and justly agreed in the opinion, that religious instructers are useful in civil society, it discovers no less ignorance, than presumption in those, who adopt and endeavor to propagate the opposite sentiment. The generality of mankind may, undoubtedly, form false opinions concerning many subjects in religion, morality, and politics, which it becomes wise and learned men to expose and refute. But for any pretended politicians and philosophers to rise up and contradict the common opinion of all nations in all ages, upon a subject which has always fallen under their observation and experience, betrays a want of judgment or information, as well as a want of respect for superior wisdom. Though there may be ignorance without error, yet there cannot be error without ignorance. Let men be ever so wise and learned in some things, they are always ignorant in those things, concerning which they form false and groundless opinions. Indeed, learning is often the fruitful source of ignorance, as well as of knowledge; for the more ideas men collect by reading, observation, or study, the more ignorant they are, unless they are able to discern the agreement and disagreement of their ideas, and to draw just conclusions from them. This will account for the gross errors and blunders of many learned infidels, who have written upon religious subjects. It was owing to learned ignorance, that Morgan undertook to prove, from the Old Testament, that the Jewish priesthood were a heavy and useless burden to the nation. And it was owing to the same cause, that Helvetius and Voltaire endeavored to refute the common opinion of mankind, respecting the political benefit which they have always supposed they have derived from religious instructers. This gross error of learned infidels implies the ignorance of some important things, which it is a reproach to any professed politicians and moral philosophers not to understand.

It certainly betrays the want of knowledge in the science of politics. The chief design of civil government is, to restrain men from disturbing the peace and happiness of civil society. But the history of the world affords abundant evidence of the weakness and insufficiency of all human laws, to answer this important purpose. It must appear, therefore, to every wise and discerning man, who has traced the uniform effects of civil

government, that it has always stood in need of religion, to supply its essential defects. So that the more learned any are in law, or in history, and yet deny the utility of religious teachers; the more they discover a natural or moral incapacity to draw just conclusions from the plainest premises.

Nor is this all; for they betray no less ignorance of human nature, than of the impotency of human laws. All men are more or less sensible of being weak and dependent creatures, which naturally disposes them to lean upon some superior invisible power. As individuals, they find they cannot support either themselves or each other; and hence, in cases of extreme doubt, or danger, or distress, they spontaneously look up to some invisible divinity, to afford them light, protection and relief. These feelings, which are so congenial to religion in general, mankind have universally manifested by their conduct. They have always had their divinities, their real or pretended prophets and religious instructers, and their external rites and modes of religious worship. This natural propensity of mankind to religion, all wise and prudent rulers have observed; and instead of opposing and restraining it, have taken peculiar care to foster and cherish it in the minds of their subjects. If, therefore, any of our modern politicians and philosophers really imagine that religion and its teachers are detrimental to civil society, they have searched the records of religion and of government in vain, and only involved themselves in gross ignorance upon a subject, which all nations have clearly understood. It is to be hoped and expected, that but few will embrace this novel and dangerous error, which is founded in ignorance, and which stands completely refuted by the universal observation and experience of mankind.

2. If what has been said be true, then none are fit for civil rulers who would exclude religious instructers from civil society. Men may possess different abilities, and entertain different sentiments in religion and politics, and yet be qualified to fill some public and important stations. But those who maintain that religious instructers are useless in society, are totally unqualified to have any official concern in government. For should such men be invested with power to make or to execute the laws of the land, they would strip them of their greatest influence, and strike away the strongest pillar of their own authority. There are some who despise and neglect all religious instruction themselves, and yet view it of great importance to others, and would exert all their influence to support religious teachers. Such men as these, if qualified in other respects, may manage public affairs with great advantage to the public, while they neglect to secure the one thing need-

ful to themselves. Though the fear of God, or vital piety, be a peculiar beauty and excellence in civil rulers; yet those who have no love to the gospel, may be great and useful statesmen. It is an absurd sentiment that civil dominion is founded in grace, and that none but the subjects of Christ's kingdom are qualified to rule in the kingdoms of men. But still, none are fit to be intrusted with civil power, who believe and maintain, that all religion and religious teachers are a burden rather than a benefit to civil society. This absurd and pernicious opinion must give a dangerous turn to their public as well as private conduct. And should they only have an opportunity, they would exert their power to banish not only the appearance, but even the existence of religion from the face of the earth, and do all that in them lies to subvert the foundations of government. Politicians of this description lately seized the opportunity offered them to carry their infidel opinion into practice; and they ordained that there should be no teachers, nor even object, of religion in the nation. They denied the existence of God, destroyed the professed ministers of the gospel, and set the people free from all the motives and obligations of religion. And what were the consequences of this bold and presumptuous attempt to govern without the ministers of religion, and without the motives of eternity? We know they were anarchy and confusion, and the untimely end of those who made the foolish and wicked experiment. But did those politicians want either learning or abilities? Did they not plume themselves upon their superior knowledge and wisdom? How then can any now imagine that the greatest talents will qualify men to govern the affairs of state, who have the folly and temerity to discard the common and well founded opinion of mankind, that the fear of man without the fear of God, is totally insufficient to support civil government? It is a glaring inconsistency in any people, who acknowledge the truth and divinity of the christian religion, to commit their government into the hands of atheists and infidels, whose opinions are hostile to moral obligation and the strongest cements of civil society.

3. It appears from the leading sentiment in this discourse, that a people ought to consider the gift of wise and faithful ministers, as a great public blessing. They are competent judges of their own happiness, and of the means and instruments by which it is promoted. When they find by observation and experience that their religious teachers do really employ their time and abilities for their temporal as well as spiritual benefit, they ought to be sensible of the divine goodness, in giving them such useful and necessary instructers.

God justly expects that a people should gratefully acknowledge his kindness in bestowing upon them the distinguishing favor of faithful and exemplary ministers. He appeals to the consciences of his ancient peculiar people, whether they were not greatly indebted to his goodness, for raising up and supplying them with faithful prophets and preachers of religion. His expostulation with them upon this subject is extremely plain and pointed. "I brought you up from the land of Egypt, and led you forty years in the wilderness, to possess the land of the Amorite. And I raised up of your sons for prophets, and of your young men for Nazarites. Is it not even thus, O ye children of Israel? saith the Lord." Before they became so degenerate, they were not so ungrateful to God for the gifts of prophets and preachers. In the days of Jehoiada, they were deeply sensible of the great good he did in Israel, and at his death expressed their grateful feelings, by the highest marks of public respect. Other nations have entertained and expressed the same sentiments in regard to religious instructers. The British parliament have more than once returned their thanks to particular clergymen, for the essential services they had rendered the nation.* If we look into the history of our own country, we shall find that New England has heretofore highly esteemed the sacred order, and considered them as some of the best promoters, not only of religion, but of learning and all the interests of civil society. It must be very ungrateful in Americans, now to rise up and contradict the voice of their forefathers, and the general voice of mankind in all ages. Can they ever become so insensible of the goodness of God, and of the useful services of his ministers, as to wish to destroy them, or banish them from their borders? No people in the world, it is believed, have more reason to be thankful for religious instructers, than we of the United States. We have the best evidence, that under God, our ministers have done great good in our Israel; and are now as necessary to secure and promote our civil and religious interests, as they have ever been, since our fathers landed on these western shores.

4. It appears from the foregoing observations, that it is the wisdom and duty of civil rulers to favor the cause of religion, and employ every proper method to promote the general diffusion of religious knowledge. They can do nothing more effectual to establish their just authority in the hearts and consciences of the people, and to form them good subjects of civil government. This has been the united opinion of the wisest and best statesmen. Those who framed our state constitution

* Burnet and Hoadly.

were fully convinced of the great importance of religious instructers, and made as ample provision for the religious instruction of the people as they could make, consistently with the rights of conscience and religious liberty. Though nothing can be said in favor of religious establishments, which have done so much mischief in the christian world, yet a great deal may be said in favor of protecting the preachers of the gospel in the discharge of their duty, and in the enjoyment of all their civil and religious privileges.

The rulers of our land never had a louder call to promote religious instruction than at the present day. Our nation is spreading with astonishing rapidity over the vast tracts of our uncultivated country, where the inhabitants will soon in all probability become equal in numbers to those who remain in their primitive settlements. And should they continue destitute of religious instruction, there is reason to fear that no human laws will be sufficient to restrain them from those evil courses which will be ruinous to themselves if not to the nation. If our civil magistrates fear God, or regard man, or seek the public peace and welfare, they will consider it their wisdom and duty to aid the propagation of christianity, and give all parts of the country the best means of religious instruction. This appears to be the most probable way of preventing the spread and fatal effects of those pernicious sentiments in religion and politics, which the enemies of the gospel and of the general government are endeavoring to propagate with a blind and flaming zeal.

5. If it be a truth, confirmed by the common experience of mankind, that religious instructers are of real service to promote the principal design of civil government; then it argues a great degree of infatuation in those who govern, to oppose or restrain religious instruction. Men may be extremely wicked, without being blind to their own present temporal interest. They may be wise to do those evils which directly tend to promote their own power and aggrandizement. But when any pursue such methods to attain power, and wealth, and popularity, as reason and scripture, and the general voice of mankind, tell them will certainly defeat their designs, then they may properly be said to be infatuated. And such is the infatuation of those who hold the reins of government, when they attempt to increase their power and influence by depriving their subjects of religious instruction. We have many awful examples of such infatuated rulers recorded in scripture, for the warning and admonition of all future magistrates. Jeroboam was so infatuated as to put all the faithful priests out of office, and to forbid an inspired prophet to speak in the name of the Lord.

"Then Amaziah the priest of Beth-el sent to Jeroboam king of Israel, saying, Amos hath conspired against thee in the midst of the house of Israel: the land is not able to bear his words. Also Amaziah said unto Amos, O thou seer, go, flee thee away into the land of Judah, and there eat bread, and prophesy there. But prophesy not again any more at Beth-el: for it is the king's chapel, and it is the king's court." Ahab, another of the idolatrous kings of Israel, was so infatuated as to cut off all the true prophets of the Lord that he could find. Zedekiah was no less blinded, when he delivered Jeremiah into the hands of those who sought his life, because he had faithfully admonished the nation of their duty and danger. Herod, and Pontius Pilate, and the Jews, put the Son of God to death, for no other offence than that of preaching the most important truths. I know, indeed, that all these religious teachers were charged with the odious crime of preaching sedition; but there was not the least foundation for the charge, and they actually suffered for performing the religious duties of their sacred office. The Jewish rulers in all these instances, and especially in the last, were so infatuated as to believe they were pursuing the way of safety, while they were taking the direct road to destruction. They put Christ to death to preserve themselves from the Romans, which proved the procuring cause of the Romans coming and destroying the nation. The French acted the same absurd part, when they cruelly massacred more than a million of religious instructers, merely because they favored and supported what they supposed to be the cause of true religion. This was owing to their then awful infatuation, as they themselves have since practically acknowledged, by recalling and reëstablishing numbers of those religious teachers who had escaped the general carnage of the clergy. So far as any of the rulers in our nation manifest a disposition to silence, or destroy the influence of those in the sacred office, they plainly discover the symptoms of a fatal delusion. Nothing but a spirit of infatuation can lead them to imagine that either their own or the public safety depends upon putting an end to religious instruction. If they presume to tread in this path, it will undoubtedly lead them to the same end to which it has led all others who have presumed to walk in it; that is, to their own destruction.

6. If religious instruction have such a powerful influence upon the minds of men as has been represented, then it is extremely difficult for civil rulers to subvert a good government, while religious teachers faithfully discharge their duty. They can do much to support the interests of religion, morality, and social virtue; and while these are supported, a people will not

be disposed to give up the blessings of good government. Jehoiada lived in a day of declension, when the men of Judah were bent to backsliding; but by his wise and faithful instructions he prevented, as long as he lived, the rulers and the people from pursuing those unwise and wicked measures which gradually and finally effected their ruin. This clearly appears from what is said concerning the conduct of Joash, both before and after the death of Jehoiada. It is said, "Joash did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, while Jehoiada the priest instructed him." But we are told, "After the death of Jehoiada came the princes of Judah, and made obeisance to the king. Then the king hearkened unto them. And they left the house of the Lord God of their fathers, and served groves and idols: and wrath came upon Judah and Jerusalem for their trespass." Though Joash and his princes and people were strongly disposed to go astray, yet they found themselves effectually restrained by the weight and authority of religious instruction. Hence it appears, that religious instruction lays the strongest moral restraints upon those who wish to subvert the foundations of religion and government. It is scarcely possible, therefore, that our nation should suffer the loss of their civil and religious privileges by the arts and intrigues of designing men, so long as the clergy, through the continent, unitedly and faithfully discharge the duties of their office.

7. This subject teaches the duty and obligation of all the ministers of the gospel to exert all the power and influence which their sacred office gives them, to prevent the ruin of the nation. The apparent prevalence of vice and infidelity directly tends to weaken and destroy all the nerves and sinews of the body politic, and to bring on its final dissolution. The words of the prophet are the best that can be found to describe its present disordered and languishing condition. "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds and bruises and putrefying sores." The enemies of religion and government are incessantly engaged to eradicate from the minds of the people every religious principle and virtuous habit, and to destroy all the influence of religious instruction. The better to accomplish this malignant purpose, they smile upon some religious instructers, and frown upon others; and use all their art and sophistry to deter them from the faithful discharge of their duty. If ministers preach against licentiousness, they accuse them of preaching against liberty. If ministers preach against infidelity, they accuse them of preaching against the powers that be. If ministers inculcate the mutual duties of rulers and subjects, they accuse them of

preaching sedition. And if ministers only teach the common sentiment of mankind in all ages, they accuse them of going out of their province and preaching politics. They will not allow them to teach their hearers that religious instruction is useful and necessary in civil society. In a word, they employ every method they can devise to silence the whole body of the clergy, to take off all moral restraints from the minds of the people, and bring them into a state of universal infidelity and licentiousness. Now what is the duty of ministers of the gospel in this alarming situation of the country? Is it their duty to obey man rather than God? Is it their duty to stand still and be silent, and let vice and infidelity produce their fatal effects? Or is it their plain and indispensable duty to imitate the noble example of Jehoiada the priest, and exert all their influence to defeat the designs of those who are aiming to corrupt and destroy the nation? They never had a louder call, a fairer opportunity, or greater encouragement to stand in their lot, to set their faces as a flint, and to oppose by all the force and authority of religious instruction, atheism, deism, infidelity, and all the land-defiling iniquities. If they plainly preach the great doctrines and duties of christianity, and inculcate upon rulers and subjects their mutual duties and obligations, they may be instruments in the divine hand of restraining the nation from those errors in principle and practice which threaten its ruin. This is a most animating motive to be faithful in their office, and to do all the good they can in the American Israel. But if any minister of the gospel refuse to come up to the help of the Lord against the mighty, and neglect to plead his cause against the enemies of his kingdom, it may be said to him as Mordecai said to Esther when her nation was upon the point of destruction. "Think not with thyself that thou shalt escape — For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise from another place, but thou shalt be destroyed."

Finally, we ought to infer from this subject, that we have great reason to fear the displeasure of God, for neglecting and abusing the ministrations of his word. He has raised up and sent us his ministering servants, who have long labored, by their faithful instructions, to make us a holy and happy people. But we have neglected to hear and refused to obey his voice, by his sacred ambassadors. How many, of late years, have wholly forsaken the house of God! and how many more have become extremely inconstant in their attendance upon divine ordinances! By this criminal negligence, multitudes have grown up ignorant of the important truths of the gospel, and unimpressed with the solemn objects and motives of eternity;

which has exposed them to suck in the most poisonous sentiments, and to pursue the most vicious and destructive courses. Many others there are, who, though they have not neglected to hear, yet have refused to obey the religious instructions which have been poured into their minds from sabbath to sabbath, through the whole course of their lives. They have hated instruction and despised reproof, and with their eyes wide open, have followed the multitude to do evil. Such neglect and abuse of religious instruction, have brought a heavy load of guilt upon our nation. We have not despised man, but God, by neglecting and abusing his sacred institutions.

And now our greatest danger is, that instead of reforming, we shall wax worse and worse, and more and more provoke God to anger, by continuing to neglect and abuse the ministrations of his word. We may, indeed, have as many houses of public worship, and as many public teachers of religion, seven years hence, as we have now; but will these houses be filled? or these ministers of the sanctuary be heard? If the opposers of all religious instruction continue industrious and successful, the ways of Zion will be unoccupied, and the houses of God deserted. And is there not apparent danger of our revolting more and more, by neglecting and abusing divine institutions? This will ripen us, faster than any thing else, for the heaviest judgments of God. When God condescends to assign the reasons for punishing his peculiar people, he never fails to mention their stupidity and obstinacy under the warnings and admonitions of his servants. By Isaiah he says to his people, "Therefore I will number you to the sword, and ye shall bow down to the slaughter; because when I called ye did not answer; when I spake, ye did not hear." To the same people he says by Jeremiah, "Behold, I will bring evil upon this city, and upon all her towns, all the evil that I have pronounced against it, because they have hardened their necks, that they might not hear my words." And again he says by the same prophet, "Since the day that your fathers came forth out of the land of Egypt unto this day, I have even sent unto you all my servants the prophets, daily rising up and sending them: yet they hearkened not unto me, nor inclined their ear, but hardened their neck. Therefore thou shalt speak all these words unto them; but they will not hearken unto thee: thou shalt call unto them; but they will not answer thee: But thou shalt say unto them, This is a nation that obeyeth not the voice of the Lord their God, nor receiveth instruction." The curse deserved and threatened is — "the land shall be desolate." God is the same holy and righteous being from age to age. He is as much displeased with us as he was with his ancient

people, for despising and abusing the instructions and admonitions of his word: and we have just ground to fear, that he will punish us as severely as he did them, for sinning against all the light and instruction which he has given us by his faithful servants. In the view of our guilty and dangerous situation, we have abundant reason for humiliation, fasting, and prayer before God this day. We ought to bewail the atheism, the infidelity, the licentiousness, the impenitence and stupidity, which abound through the nation. These national sins will certainly draw down national judgments, unless we reform, repent, and return to the God of our fathers, from whom we have unreasonably revolted. This is the duty which God requires of a degenerate people, and upon the performance of which, he promises to forgive and save them. "Therefore also now, saith the Lord, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: And rend your heart and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God. Let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thine heritage to reproach. Then will the Lord be jealous for his land, and pity his people." Amen.

SERMON XVII.

PUBLIC SPIRIT.

OCTOBER 15, 1806.

For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep. — Acts, xiii. 36.

As God is pleased to employ human agents in carrying on his designs in this world, so he never fails to find those persons who are best qualified to answer his purpose. This he intimates by the mode of expression in the twenty-second verse of the context. "I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfil all my will." The Lord saw something in David, the youngest son of Jesse, which neither he, nor Samuel saw, when he was sent to anoint him and set him apart for the service of God. It seems they would have preferred either of his seven brothers; but God, who looked on the heart, and not on the outward appearance, preferred him. Nor was the divine choice misplaced; for as soon as David appeared in public, he seized every opportunity of promoting the cause of God, and the good of his fellow men. And it is truly astonishing what talents he displayed, and what signal services he performed, in the course of his life. After he had undauntedly fought his way to the throne of Israel, he found the kingdom weak and divided. But he soon united the nation in peace, and conquered their numerous and powerful enemies. Having finished his long and bloody wars, he turned his attention to the internal concerns of the nation. He devised the best methods to regulate the services of the sanctuary, and promote the public worship of God. He prepared many materials for the building of the temple, and it was in his heart to have accomplished that noble and pious design. But when God

denied him this privilege, and acquainted him that the time of his departure drew near, he set his kingdom, his house, and his soul in order, and prepared to die in a good old age, full of days, riches, and honor. This fully authorized the Evangelist to say, "David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep." The mode of expression here is designed to signify the composure and serenity of mind in which he died, and not to intimate that his death put a final period to his existence, or threw him into a state of insensibility. The text plainly represents David as living a useful life, and dying a peaceful death, whether it be read as it now stands, or more exactly according to the original. The literal translation is, "David, in his own generation having served the will of God, fell on sleep." This reading is rather to be preferred to the other, because it presents David's character in a more pious light, and more strongly marks the connection between his piety and usefulness in life, and his hope and happiness in death. These things, which were inseparably connected in David, always will be inseparably united in all good men who faithfully serve God and their own generation. This suggests a plain and important truth to our present consideration:

That a useful life prepares men for a happy death.

To illustrate this subject, I shall consider first, what it is to live a useful life; and then, how this prepares men for a happy death.

I. Let us consider what it is to live a useful life. There is a sense in which all men are useful. They all, in some way or other, serve the divine purposes. Pharaoh, Haman, and the king of Assyria, were instrumental in bringing about the designs of Providence. Howbeit, they meant not so, neither did their hearts think so. They intended to accomplish their own ambitious designs; but God overruled all their views and operations in subserviency to his own glory and the good of his people, whom they sought to destroy. But in order to be useful in the sense of the text, and according to the common acceptation of the phrase, men must imbibe the spirit of the patriarch, and act from the same principles of piety and benevolence. This leads me to observe,

1. That, to live a useful life, men must live in the exercise of supreme love to God. They must give him the throne in their hearts, before they can take their proper place at his footstool, and feel and act as his dutiful subjects. They cannot serve both God and mammon at the same time. While they love themselves supremely, they will seek a private separate interest, which is wholly hostile to the glory of God and the interest of his moral kingdom. They must seek first the kingdom of God,

and give their hearts to him, before they can do any thing which will be acceptable in his sight. None can take a single step towards usefulness, until they make a sincere and unreserved dedication of themselves to the service of God. David took this step in his youth, which had a most happy influence upon his future life. He often recollected and renewed his vows and engagements to be the Lord's. "I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments. I delight to do thy will, O God; yea, thy law is within my heart. I love thy commandments above gold; yea, above fine gold. I esteem thy precepts concerning all things to be right. I will run in the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart." It appears from these and many other declarations of David in his most solemn moments, that he lived in the habitual exercise of supreme love to God. He made the divine will his rule, and the divine glory his ultimate end, in all he did to promote the temporal and spiritual good of his fellow men. The same spirit will have the same influence upon the lives of all those who possess it. While they keep themselves in the love of God, they will cheerfully subordinate all their own interests to his glory, and be sincere and steadfast, and persevering, in his service.

2. Not only a spirit of piety, but a spirit of universal benevolence is necessary, in order to live a truly useful life. Every man ought to love his neighbor as himself, and live in the exercise of that charity, which seeketh not her own. This is enjoined by divine authority. "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth." Pure disinterested benevolence inspires a man with a tender concern for all the human race, and leads him to do to others, as he would that others should do to him. It makes him willing to give up his private right, or his personal interest, whenever the public good requires such an act of self-denial. It disposes him not only to love those who love him, and to do good to those who do good to him, but to love all, and to do good to all, as he has opportunity. David acted under the influence of such a benevolent spirit, while he served his own generation by the will of God. He placed his happiness in theirs, and sincerely sought their highest good. He could say from the bottom of his heart, "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy." He felt and expressed true benevolence towards his enemies and the enemies of God. "But as for me when they were sick, my clothing was sack-

cloth; I humbled my soul with fasting; and my prayer returned into mine own bosom. I behaved myself as though he had been my friend or brother." The sincerity of these professions appears from some singular instances of his disinterested conduct. Though Saul was his mortal enemy, yet he once and again spared his life, when he had him entirely in his power. He loved Jonathan as his own soul; and acted a truly noble and friendly part towards him. He was ever ready to jeopard his life in the high places of the field for the safety of his kingdom; and nothing but the importunity of his subjects could, in any case, restrain him from it. Yea, when he saw the destroying angel holding his sword over Jerusalem, he prayed that it might rather fall upon himself than upon his innocent people. In a word, his whole life was filled up with acts of kindness, beneficence and public utility. This was the genuine fruit of true benevolence, which will always have the same effect upon those who feel its happy influence.

It will enable them to discern, and dispose them to pursue, the public good; which must render them extensively useful through the whole course of their lives.

3. Those who would live the most useful life, must not only possess the principles of piety and benevolence, but faithfully perform the various duties of the various stations in which they are placed. As God has endowed different men with different talents, so he has assigned them different parts to act upon the stage of life. And it is only by moving properly in their proper spheres of action, that they can become the most extensively serviceable to the world. No man can fail of being a useful member of society and a blessing to others, who faithfully discharges the duties of his proper place. But those who are raised above the rest of the community, are under the strongest obligations to employ their superior talents in the faithful discharge of the important duties of their elevated stations. Where much is given, much is required. Where God has bestowed five talents, he requires the faithful improvement of five. And every man improves his talents the most properly and most usefully, when he faithfully employs them in discharging the duties of his particular station, whether it be high or low, public or private, civil or religious. It was in this way that David became eminently useful in every stage and station of life. While a child under his father's care, he performed the duties of a child. While a servant under Saul, he performed the duties of a servant. When he became the head of a family, he walked within his house with a perfect heart, and faithfully maintained family government and family religion. And when he was raised to the highest place of power and trust,

"he fed his people according to the integrity of his heart, and guided them by the skilfulness of his hands." Such is the part that all men are called to act, while they are passing from stage to stage, and from station to station in life. "Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given unto us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; or ministry, let us wait on our ministering; or he that exhorteth, on exhortation; he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; and he that ruleth, with diligence." Let every person only discharge the duties of every relation, connection, and office, in which Providence places him, and he will live a life which is virtuous, amiable and useful, both in the sight of God and man. Hence it is natural to conclude,

II. That such a life will terminate in a happy death. This we find fully exemplified in the life and death of David. "For after he had served his own generation by the will of God, he fell on sleep." His useful life was closed in a serene and peaceful death. The other patriarchs, whose amiable and useful lives are recorded, died in faith and hope. Simeon and Stephen, two faithful servants of God, left the world in peace and joy. And the scriptures give us full assurance, that a useful life leads to a happy death. "The wicked is driven away in his wickedness, but the righteous hath hope in his death." "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace." A useful life lays a solid foundation for a safe and happy transition out of time into eternity. For,

1. It contains a source of pleasing reflections upon what is past. As men draw near, in their own apprehension, to the close of life, they naturally turn their thoughts back, and reflect upon what they have done in the world. And there is nothing past, which can afford more agreeable reflections, than a consciousness of having sincerely served their own generation according to the will of God, and in some measure answered the great design of living. When good Hezekiah was sick and expected to die, his thoughts spontaneously flew back upon his past useful life, which proved a source of peculiar comfort in his trying situation. "He turned his face to the wall, and prayed unto the Lord, and said, Remember, O Lord, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight." He could reflect upon his repairing the temple, restoring the purity of public worship, and reviving the sinking cause of religion through his kingdom, with heart-felt pleasure and satisfaction. Whoever feels a consciousness of doing good, has an unfailing source of the happiest reflections. Hence it became a proverb in Israel:

"A good man shall be satisfied from himself." All good men have the satisfaction of being more or less useful, in promoting the glory of God, and the benefit of their fellow-creatures. So that, when they come to die, they experience that peace of mind which can flow from no other cause than a virtuous and useful life.

2. Such a life contains a source of agreeable anticipations as well as of consoling reflections. It enables men in a dying hour, not only to look back, but to look forward with peculiar joy and confidence. Those who have taken delight in serving God on earth, may look forward, and anticipate the happiness which will result from serving him in a higher and nobler manner in the kingdom of glory. This is a bright and glorious prospect, which may well afford great peace and consolation to dying christians, after they have spent their life here in the service of God. So the apostle John thought when he had a vision of the heavenly inhabitants. Speaking of those who had come out of great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, he says, "Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple." And in another description of heaven, he says, "The throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and his servants shall serve him." David, in the course of life, anticipated the everlasting service of God with great delight. "While I live will I praise the Lord; I will sing praise unto my God while I have any being." This anticipation of the future, in contrast with his reflection upon the past service of God, became more joyful and transporting, as he drew nearer to the verge of time, and had a more clear and full view of eternity. "Now these be the last words of David. David the son of Jesse said, and the man who was raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel said, The spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue. The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me, He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God: And he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain." This description of a good ruler, David could apply, with very little variation, to himself, and therefore adds, "Although my house be not so with God;" that is, although my past reign has not been altogether just and prosperous, and God has frowned upon my family; "yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure: for this is all my salvation and all my desire." Such a pleasing anticipation of the future service and enjoy-

ment of God, disarmed death of its sting and the grave of its terror, and enabled him to leave the world with dignity and joy. The apostle Paul also experienced the same noble and transporting views, at the close of his eminently pious and useful life. "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous judge shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." A useful life always lays a just foundation for such happy anticipations and reflections in the trying hour of death. But though God may see fit to call some of his servants so suddenly from their labors, as to give them no opportunity for reflection or anticipation; or though he may deny them the light of his countenance, and suffer them to die in doubts and fears; yet I may add,

3. That their fidelity and usefulness will certainly meet a glorious and ample reward beyond the grave. God has promised that it shall be well with the righteous, and that those who are faithful unto death shall receive a crown of life. All their good deeds shall come up in remembrance before him, and receive the marks of his approbation at the resurrection of the just. He will give them a recompense in due proportion to their fidelity and usefulness in life. Upon those who have faithfully employed their superior talents in exalted stations, he will bestow a superior reward. This will lay a foundation for high and honorable distinctions among the blessed through every period of their existence. As one star differs from another in glory, so one saint will differ from another in his measure of holiness and happiness, for ever. And this diversity instead of diminishing, will perpetually enhance the endless felicity of those who shall live a useful life, and finally share in the inheritance of the saints in light.

It now remains to improve and apply the subject.

1. It appears from what has been said in this discourse, that real religion is necessary to qualify every person for the state he is in, or the station he fills. This will infallibly direct his views and guide his exertions to the great end of living, and form him for the service of God and of his own generation. Those who are destitute of grace, whether they move in a higher or lower sphere of life, will either neglect or oppose every interest but their own. And though God may overrule their selfish designs and pursuits to his own glory and the general good; yet he will consider them as idle and unprofitable servants, who abuse their talents, and deserve to be punished

for their ingratitude and negligence. He says of such, "they are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable: there is none that doeth good, no, not one." No natural nor acquired knowledge, no exterior decency nor propriety of conduct, is sufficient to qualify men for any public, or even private station, without the spirit of pure, disinterested benevolence. They must give their hearts to God, and govern their conduct by the rules of his word, in order to the right performance of any duty, or the faithful discharge of any office. If we search the scriptures, which contain a long catalogue of the faithful servants of God, we shall find that piety, and generally early piety, laid the foundation of their eminently useful lives. We know that Samuel and David, Josiah, Jeremiah, and Daniel, and many other illustrious men, whose lives are recorded by the pen of inspiration, remembered their Creator in the days of their youth, and early devoted their time, their talents, and their influence, to the service of God. Such has been and always will be the effect of true religion, to prepare men for a useful life and a happy death. It does, therefore, most seriously concern those who have been standing all their days idle, to begin their first work, and lay a foundation for usefulness through the residue of their days. Whether they are young or old, they have no more time to misspend. Their past negligence should awaken and stimulate them to future activity and diligence. Let them immediately renounce their sloth and stupidity, and faithfully discharge every duty which results from every relation, connection, and station, in which they are called to act.

2. It appears from what has been said, that usefulness forms the most beautiful character in the eyes of the world, as well as in the sight of God. Whether men are selfish or benevolent themselves, they love their benefactors, and agree in highly esteeming those whom they view as contributing to their happiness. The world has always united in the esteem and applause of useful men. The heathen nations have admired and often adored their wise law-givers, their valiant generals, their benevolent patriots, and all those who rendered essential services to the public. David, while he served his own generation by the will of God, was greatly admired and applauded. At one time it was the united voice of the nation, "Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands." At another time it was the united voice of the army, "Thou art worth ten thousand of us." The benevolence, beneficence and usefulness of Job, united all hearts and all voices in his favor. "When I went out to the gate through the city, when I prepared my seat in the street, the young men saw me and hid

themselves: and the aged arose and stood up. When the ear heard me, then it blessed me; and when the eye saw me, it gave witness to me: because I delivered the poor and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me: and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy." Joseph was eminently useful in every private and public capacity; and his usefulness commanded not only the love and confidence of his master, but the esteem and admiration of Pharaoh and all his kingdom. Many other instances might be mentioned; but these sufficiently show that there is nothing which renders men so justly and universally amiable in the eyes of the world, as a truly benevolent and useful life. Nor is it strange that men should be more esteemed and applauded for their goodness than their greatness. Few are capable of forming a just estimate of superior abilities; but all are capable of discerning and admiring superior benevolence and usefulness. Besides, there is a natural propensity in mankind to sink the reputation of those who stand above them in knowledge, power, wealth, or influence, unless these talents are wisely and benevolently employed in doing good. But bad as the world are, they cannot withhold their approbation and applause from those who are eminently and extensively useful.

3. This subject teaches the goodness of God in prolonging the lives of his faithful servants. This life is the most important period in their existence, as it affords them the largest field for activity and usefulness. Here they are workers together with God in carrying into execution his most gracious and most important designs. And while they are faithfully performing the duties of their respective stations, they are laying a foundation for a rich and glorious reward in a future state. None of their good deeds will be forgotten, but be abundantly recompensed at the resurrection of the just. It is therefore a great privilege to the pious and benevolent, to have the days of their usefulness extended even to old age, which will serve to increase their future and eternal weight of glory. Besides, this is a great benefit to the world, which would be extremely injured if not destroyed by being deprived of their exertions and example. What would have become of the whole world, if the life of Noah had not been continued to a great age? What would have become of the Israelites in Egypt, and in the wilderness, had not Moses lived till he had conducted them to the borders of Canaan? What would have been their condition after they reached the promised land, if David had not served his own generation until he had conquered their enemies, and prepared the way for the peaceful

reign of Solomon? What would have been the deplorable stiuation of the Jews in Babylon, had not Daniel lived in the days of Cyrus, whom he persuaded to grant them deliverance? And how great a loss would the whole christian world have sustained, if the apostle John had not outlived all the other apostles, and written the book of Revelation! The wisdom which useful men obtain by long observation and experience often enables them to perform more essential services in the decline, than in the morning, or even meridian of life. The goodness of God, therefore, is to be seen in the preservation of their lives, which is both a public and private blessing, which calls for both public and private gratitude.

These observations naturally lead us to reflect upon the divine goodness, in so long protracting the life and usefulness of the late Honorable Jabez Fisher. Though he experienced some of those bodily infirmities which are incident to old age, yet he retained so much of the native vigor of his mind, as to be capable both of enjoying and doing good, to the very close of life. He was unquestionably the most useful man among us. He became, as he supposed, a subject of special grace, at the commencement of the great and general revival of religion, above sixty years ago. Not long after he made a profession of his faith, he was chosen to the office of deacon, which he sustained for more than fifty years, to the honor of religion, and the prosperity of the church. His superior abilities and integrity soon raised him to public notice, and he was, with great unanimity, elected to represent the town in the Legislature of the State, where he continued about twenty years successively, either as a member of the House, or of the Senate, or of the Governor's Council. Though he held these high stations in the most trying times that America ever saw, yet he never lost the love and confidence of the public, who continued to esteem and employ him, until he resigned his seat at the Council board for want of health. He was not only a member of the several bodies which have been mentioned, but a very active, influential, and useful member. His speeches were heard with attention, and his measures frequently approved and adopted. He was, indeed, through the whole of his public life, greatly instrumental in promoting the safety, interest, and happiness of the people. He rose from station to station, not by the aid of wealth, nor powerful connections, but by the mere dint of merit. He possessed such virtues and talents as justly attracted the public attention and esteem.

He manifested peculiar mildness and moderation in all his conduct. These amiable qualities, for which he was undoubtedly indebted to the combined influence of nature and grace,

rendered him highly acceptable to the multitude of his brethren. It was extremely difficult for any to become his personal enemies, because his calm and placid behavior prevented both prejudice and resentment. And though in times of great irritation and animosity, he could not fail to meet with injurious treatment, yet he kept such a constant command over his spirits, as rarely to discover the least appearance of anger, and never, perhaps, to speak unadvisedly with his lips. He possessed a large portion of the spirit of Moses, who was the meekest man upon the face of the earth.

His candor was equal to his moderation and mildness. He was as ready to hear, as to speak; as ready to learn, as to teach; and whenever he saw reason for it, as ready to follow as to lead. He neither leaned to his own understanding, nor placed an implicit faith in the understanding of others. He was always open to conviction, and disposed to receive information from any who were able to impart it. He availed himself of every source of knowledge and improvement, and made rapid advances in practical wisdom, while engaged in public business with men of eminence. He exemplified Solomon's observation, "Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be yet wiser: teach a just man, and he will increase in learning."

He was no less judicious than candid. He had a clear and quick discernment to distinguish truth from error, right from wrong, wisdom from cunning, and artifice from sincerity. He seldom formed a false opinion of either men or things. He was a self-taught politician, who could foresee what laws and measures would have a salutary operation; and no artful or intriguing men could lead him to aid or approve measures which were detrimental to the public weal. Though he never saw reason to change sides in respect to the first principles of government, yet he would not allow himself to prefer the interest of a party to the general interest, which he uniformly sought, and endeavored to promote.

His public spirit, therefore, formed another amiable trait in his character. Few men possessed a larger share of true patriotism. He kept his eye and heart steadily fixed upon the good of the nation, and left no means in his power unemployed, to preserve the safety, and increase the prosperity of his country. While many were seeking their own emolument, under the pretext of promoting the public good, he sacrificed his time, his interest, and his health, for the attainment of this noble object.

Governed by this patriotic motive, he discovered singular integrity in discharging the duties devolved upon him, and

fulfilling the trusts reposed in him. And for this reason he was much employed by the Legislature in devising ways and means of promoting the public safety and interest, and in transacting business which required the most unlimited confidence.

This and all his other virtues were rendered more eminent and valuable by being united with uncommon firmness and perseverance. Nothing could shake him from his well-founded opinions, nor deter him from prosecuting his well-concerted measures. He was never afraid nor ashamed to do right, and promote a cause of justice and general utility. His patriotism was the fruit of benevolence, his zeal the effect of knowledge, and his resolutions the result of cool deliberation; and of consequence, whenever he undertook any matter of importance, he surmounted every obstacle, and steadily persevered in his course, until he obtained his ultimate object. By a long and faithful improvement of these peculiar virtues and talents, he eminently served his own generation by the will of God, and became not only an ornament to religion and virtue, but a rich blessing to his town and country.

But he has finished his course, and, as we hope, fallen asleep in Christ. We shall no longer enjoy the benefit of his living example and guiding influence. We have abundant reason to cry, "Help, Lord, for the godly man ceaseth, and the faithful fail from among the children of men." The death of the faithful servants of God is full of instruction at all times, and especially in this day of darkness and doubtful expectation. The late instance of mortality teaches those who are in places of power, to employ their best exertions in favor of the sinking cause of religion and government; and by a faithful discharge of every duty, prepare for the day of their decease and solemn appearance before the supreme tribunal. It teaches christians, whose hands are weakened and whose burdens are increased, to redouble their diligence and fidelity in promoting the kingdom and interest of their divine Redeemer. It teaches the aged, to give up all their worldly hopes and prospects, and prepare, as fast as possible, for a peaceful death, and a blessed immortality beyond the grave. But the surviving children are bound, by the strongest ties of nature and gratitude, to lay the death of their venerable father to heart, and learn their indispensable duty from it. They have seen his long and useful life close in a calm and peaceful death. They have been taught, by example which speaks louder than words, how to live and how to die. They are under peculiar obligations to devote their time and talents to the glory of God, and to live a

holy and useful life. May they know, therefore, the God of their father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind. For the Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts. If they seek him, he will be found of them; but if they forsake him, he will cast them off for ever.

SERMON XVIII.

RIGHTS OF THE PEOPLE.

ANNUAL THANKSGIVING, NOVEMBER 25, 1813.

And the people said unto Saul, shall Jonathan die, who hath wrought this great salvation in Israel? God forbid; as the Lord liveth, there shall not one hair of his head fall to the ground; for he hath wrought with God this day. So the people rescued Jonathan, that he died not. — 1 Sam. xiv. 45.

Soon after Saul was anointed king over Israel, his country was invaded by the Ammonites; and on that occasion he acted with spirit and energy. He raised a large army, put himself at the head of it, and gained a signal victory; which excited the admiration and applause of the people. Upon this, he dismissed and sent home all soldiers, except three thousand, whom he chose to stand around his person, and to guard the most exposed parts of his kingdom. But it was not long before "the Philistines gathered themselves together to fight with Israel, thirty thousand chariots, and six thousand horsemen, and people as the sand which is on the sea-shore in multitude." This formidable host struck a panic into the whole nation, who resorted to different ways of safety. Some fled over Jordan, while others hid themselves in caves and in thickets, and in rocks, and in high places, and in pits. Nor did the general consternation stop here, but spread into Saul's little army, who were afraid to move a step towards the enemy, until Samuel should come and offer sacrifice. But he did not come as soon as Saul and his men expected; and all of them but about six hundred deserted him. In this extreme case Saul himself ventured to offer sacrifice; but he had no sooner done this unauthorized act, than Samuel came, and reproved him for his impatience and presumption. He was now in Gibeah, where there was

nothing to defend him from the enemy in Michmash, but only a deep valley between two high and sharp rocks, which were supposed to be impassable. But while he and his handful of men lay in this desponding and dangerous posture, Jonathan his son, moved by a divine impulse, "said to the young man that bare his armor, Come, and let us go over unto the garrison of these uncircumcised; it may be that the Lord will work for us; for there is no restraint to the Lord, to save by many or by few." They immediately resolved to cross the valley, if God should give them a particular sign of success. God gave the sign they desired, and they went forward, and climbed the rock, and attacked the enemy, and killed about twenty of them. This unexpected slaughter instantaneously created a trembling throughout the whole host of the Philistines, who fled in dismay and confusion. And as soon as Saul and his men saw their flight and disorder, they asked counsel of God, and under the divine direction and assistance pursued and dispersed them. But they were unhappily prevented from gaining a complete victory, by the rash oath of Saul that day, who adjured the people, saying, "Cursed be the man that eateth any food until evening." This oath Jonathan did not hear, nor know, and without the least intention of disobeying his father, tasted a little honey, which he happened to find while pursuing the enemy. When this was discovered, Saul instantly pronounced a sentence of death upon his son. "Then Saul said to Jonathan, Tell me what thou hast done. And Jonathan told him and said, I did but taste a little honey with the end of the rod that was in mine hand, and lo, I must die. And Saul answered, God do so, and more also: for thou shalt surely die, Jonathan." The people were struck with horror and indignation, at this unlawful, unjust and cruel sentence; and felt it to be their right and duty to remonstrate against an act so barbarous and inhuman. Though they had heretofore paid proper obedience and respect to Saul as their anointed king and lawful sovereign, yet when he was about to overleap all legal bounds, and to violate the dictates of reason, conscience and humanity, they could not refrain from lifting up their voice and bearing their united and solemn testimony against shedding innocent blood. "And the people said unto Saul, Shall Jonathan die, who hath wrought this great salvation in Israel? God forbid: as the Lord liveth, there shall not one hair of his head fall to the ground; for he hath wrought with God this day. So the people rescued Jonathan that he died not." The people had reason to expect that such a just and spirited remonstrance would deter Saul from executing his bloody pur-

pose, and rescue Jonathan from the jaws of death. This historical fact was recorded for our instruction; and teaches us,

That when a people properly remonstrate against the unlawful, unjust, or cruel conduct of their rulers, they may reasonably hope to succeed.

It seems necessary, in order to set this subject in a true and practical light, to show,

I. That a people have a *right* to remonstrate against the unlawful, unjust, or cruel conduct of their rulers.

II. That it is their *duty* to remonstrate against such conduct.

III. That if they do properly remonstrate, they may reasonably hope to succeed.

I. I am to show, that a people have a right to remonstrate against the unlawful, unjust, or cruel conduct of their rulers.

To remonstrate properly signifies, to make a strong representation, or to offer reasons, against something said, proposed, or done, which appears to be improper, unjust, unlawful, or cruel. This bare explanation of the term implies, that it is the natural and unalienable right of all mankind, to remonstrate whenever they think they are really abused by those in authority. The child has a natural and unalienable right to remonstrate against any treatment of his parents which appears to be cruel, or unjust, or even highly improper. The servant has a natural and unalienable right to remonstrate against the unjust commands, restraints, or injurious conduct of his master. The subject has a natural and unalienable right to remonstrate against the unlawful, unjust, or oppressive conduct of his civil ruler. This natural and unalienable right of remonstrance is essential to all civil liberty. No child, no servant, and no subject, can be deprived of it, without being subjected to absolute slavery. Every civil government in the world, which is not completely despotic, either expressly or implicitly allows to subjects the right of remonstrance. The British government certainly grants this right to the people, who have often and lately remonstrated with success. Our federal and state constitutions expressly allow the people to remonstrate, and they have exercised this right on many occasions. If we have not the right of remonstrance, we have no right at all. If the people of Israel had not had the right to remonstrate, Saul might have put Jonathan or any other innocent subject to death. But they remonstrated; and the reasons which they offered to deter Saul from executing his rash and cruel sentence were solid and weighty. "And the people said unto Saul, Shall Jonathan die, who hath wrought this great salvation in Israel? God forbid: as the Lord liveth, there shall not one hair of his head fall to the ground; for he hath wrought with God this day."

Any other people have a right to remonstrate, or offer good reasons against the unlawful, unjust, or cruel conduct of their rulers. They are neither to be punished, nor even blamed for remonstrating in a proper manner, on any proper occasion.

II. This is not only their right, but their duty. Rulers are clothed with authority for the purpose of doing good, and not for the purpose of doing evil. Their civil powers are all derived and limited, and consequently they are responsible for their official conduct. If they assume and exercise unconstitutional authority, and abuse their subjects, by oppression, injustice, or cruelty, they ought to exercise their natural and unalienable right, and remonstrate against such illegal and unjustifiable treatment. This is a duty which they owe to God and to one another. It was the duty of the people to remonstrate against Saul's putting Jonathan to death; and had they neglected to remonstrate, they would have been guilty, as well as he, of shedding innocent blood. It was the duty of Judah to remonstrate against the unnatural and nefarious conduct of his brethren, who proposed to shed and conceal the innocent blood of Joseph. By his tender, animated remonstrance, he saved himself from sin, and his brother from death. "And Judah said unto his brethren, What profit is it if we slay our brother, and conceal his blood? — for he is our brother, and our flesh: and his brethren were content." It was the duty of Ahimelech the priest to remonstrate against Saul's slaying him and his father's house, for his innocently and benevolently supplying David's wants. When David unreasonably commanded Joab to number the people, it was the duty of Joab to remonstrate against it as he did. "And Joab answered, the Lord make his people an hundred times so many more as they be; but my Lord the king, are they not all my Lord's servants? why then doth my Lord require this thing? why will he be a cause of trespass to Israel?" This was a very just and respectful remonstrance; and had not Joab made it, he would have been guilty, and probably punished, as David was, for numbering the people. It was the duty of Esther to remonstrate against the fatal decree of Ahasuerus; and had she neglected or refused to remonstrate against it, she would have been guilty of bringing destruction upon herself, her friends, and her whole nation. So Mordecai, the greatest and best man in her kingdom, expressly told her. "Think not with thyself that thou shalt escape in the king's house, more than all the Jews. For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place, but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art

come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" After Jeremiah had been unjustly cast into the dungeon, and taken out by Zedekiah the king, it was his duty to remonstrate against being remanded back again. His language was extremely humble and pathetic. "Therefore hear now, I pray thee, O my Lord the king; let my supplication, I pray thee, be accepted before thee; that thou cause me not to return to the house of Jonathan the scribe, lest I die." The king could not resist the force of this dutiful and tender remonstrance. It was perfectly tyrannical in Nebuchadnezzar to threaten to cut the Chaldeans in pieces, and make their houses a dunghill, if they would not tell him the dream which he had forgotten; and they exercised no more than their natural and unalienable right, when they remonstrated against such an unheard-of act of tyranny. "The Chaldeans answered before the king, and said, There is not a man upon the earth that can show the king's matter; therefore there is no king, lord, nor ruler, that asked such things at any magician, or astrologer, or Chaldean." It was the duty of Stephen to remonstrate, with his dying breath, against the unrighteous and cruel conduct of his malignant persecutors. And it was a duty which Paul owed to himself, to remonstrate against the high priest, who commanded him to be smitten in an unjust and illegal manner. "Then said Paul unto him, God shall smite thee, thou whited wall: for sittest thou to judge me after the law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law?" These instances carry irresistible evidence, that it is the indispensable duty of a people to remonstrate against the unlawful, unjust, or cruel conduct of their rulers, though they hold the highest offices of government. If it was the duty of the people of Israel to remonstrate against the mal-administration of Saul and David, who were the Lord's anointed; we may justly conclude, that it is the duty of people at this day, to remonstrate against the unjust, unconstitutional, and oppressive measures of those, whom they have raised to places of power and trust. Or if it be their duty to preserve their lives, their liberties, and their religious privileges, then it is no less their duty to bear their public and united testimony against all those designs and acts of government, which appear to have a direct or remote tendency to destroy all these invaluable blessings. This leads me to show,

III. That if a people do exercise their right and perform their duty, in properly remonstrating against the unlawful, unjust, and cruel conduct of their rulers, they may reasonably hope to succeed. For,

1. This mode of seeking redress of public and private grievances has often proved successful. Judah's remonstrance had

its desired effect, and deterred his brethren from their cruel and inhuman purpose of imbruing their hands in their brother's blood. The pathetic remonstrance of Jeremiah prevented Zedekiah from sending him back to the dungeon. The well-timed and well-adapted remonstrance of Esther against the rash and fatal decree of Ahasuerus prevailed upon him to save both her and her people from complete destruction. The united and bold remonstrance of Saul's subjects restrained him from shedding the blood of his heroic and meritorious son. The British nation has always assumed and exercised the right of remonstrance, and has often prevailed upon its government to retrace their steps, repeal their laws, and change their unwise, unjust, or impolitic measures. They lately remonstrated against an unjust law, and procured a new act in favor of the poor pagans in the remote parts of the empire. Nor have the numerous, seasonable, and energetic remonstrances of the people in this country, always failed of producing very important and salutary effects upon the British parliament, and upon our own federal and state legislatures. It is not a vain thing for a people to lift up their united and powerful voice against public measures which they know and feel to be unconstitutional, unjust, and oppressive. There is always ground to hope that their proper and just remonstrances will have a powerful and salutary effect. For,

2. This mode of treating civil rulers has a natural tendency to impress their minds with a deep sense of their duty and interest to guard against or rectify their designed or undesigned errors. Their imperfect knowledge, wisdom, and goodness, render them liable to commit great and fatal mistakes in their official conduct, through ignorance or intention. But they are men, and capable of feeling the force of reason, the sense of duty, and the weight of motives, when these things are exhibited in a clear and strong light before their minds. Reasonable remonstrances are suited to enlighten their understandings; just remonstrances are suited to awaken their consciences; tender remonstrances are suited to excite their tenderness and compassion; and bold and spirited remonstrances are suited to alarm their fears of losing their popularity, their places, their interests, and even their lives. Proper remonstrances are the best weapons to attack corrupt rulers in their most vulnerable parts. Their high stations and superior powers put them beyond the reach of almost all other means and modes of attack. But both their talents and information, as well as their avarice and ambition, prepare them to feel the force of decent, just, and dignified remonstrances, with peculiar sensibility. Their dependence upon the approbation, support, and coöper-

ation of the people, has a direct tendency to constrain them, in spite of their hearts, to hear and respect their warning voice. Though they may not feel the obligation of duty, yet they may feel the obligation of interest, to review their conduct, rectify their errors, and redress the grievances of which the people justly and unitedly complain. There is therefore good ground to hope that proper remonstrances against improper measures of government will have their proper and desired effect.

3. A people may humbly hope that God will approve of their properly remonstrating against the corrupt conduct of their rulers. They may conscientiously pursue this mode of seeking a redress of public grievances, without the least disrespect or disobedience to the higher powers. They may honor their rulers for every thing honorable, esteem them for every thing excellent, and obey them in every thing lawful; and at the same time disapprove and remonstrate against their public measures, which are evidently unjust, unconstitutional, and detrimental to the public good. Their duty of remonstrance is perfectly consistent with their duty of obedience; and while they do their duty in both these respects, they may justly expect the divine approbation. The righteous Lord loves righteousness, and abhors unrighteousness, oppression, and cruelty. God has the hearts of rulers in his hand, and can dispose them to treat their injured, oppressed, aggrieved subjects, with equity, condescension, and tenderness. He disposed Pharaoh to regard the remonstrances of Moses, and to let his oppressed people go free. He disposed Cyrus to proclaim liberty to the captive Jews, and even to assist them in their return to their native land. God still stands in the congregation of the mighty, and judges among the gods. Any people, therefore, who are injured and oppressed, and properly remonstrate against the mal-administration of government, may confidently hope that God will favor their righteous cause, and dispose their rulers to hear, and to redress their grievances.

It now appears, I trust, that the leading sentiment in this discourse is true; and if it be true, it naturally suggests some things which deserve the serious regard of both rulers and subjects at the present dark and distressing day.

1. If a people have an unquestionable right to remonstrate against the unjust and oppressive conduct of their rulers, then it must be the indispensable duty of their rulers to hear their remonstrances, and grant them proper relief. Though they have a discretionary right to hear, or not to hear, any remonstrances of any part, or of the whole body of the people, yet they are responsible for the abuse of this discretionary power. Their civil authority does by no means dissolve their moral

obligation to rule in justice. The right of the people to remonstrate necessarily involves the duty of rulers to hear their remonstrances with attention and impartiality. If they offer just and weighty reasons against what they have done, or are about to do, they are morally bound to change their measures, or alter their designs, in order to prevent or remove any just cause of public uneasiness and complaint. Though Saul was king by divine appointment and by divine authority, yet he was under indispensable moral obligation to hear the just and spirited remonstrance of the people against his rash and cruel design of putting an innocent subject and dutiful son to death. It is always the proper and professed design of a people in remonstrating against public measures, to address the reason, the conscience, and benevolent feelings of rulers, and to persuade rather than to constrain them to pursue the public interest: and surely they are bound in duty to God, to their subjects, and to themselves, to hear the voice of reason, to feel the force of truth, and to dignify their office, as ministers of God for good.

2. If the people have the right to remonstrate against what they really believe to be oppressive and injurious in the administration of government; then it discovers a corrupt and tyrannical disposition in their rulers, to take away, or even to attempt to take away from them, this natural, unalienable, and important right. Good rulers, who sincerely aim to promote the public good, have nothing to fear from the voice of the people, and consequently have no disposition to stifle it. But all bad rulers are afraid of the voice of the people, and wish to deprive them of the freedom of speech, lest they should remonstrate against their ambitious and nefarious designs. It has always been the policy of despotic rulers to suppress the liberty of speech upon political subjects. The present tyrant of France has imposed perfect silence upon his printers, his priests, his civil and military officers, and every one of his subjects. It is as much as a Frenchman's life is worth, to whisper a complaint against the powers that be. Those rulers, therefore, who endeavor to destroy the liberty of speech upon political subjects, plainly discover a tyrannical spirit, and give the people just ground to fear that they are actually seeking to strip them of all their rights, and subject them to absolute slavery. They may attempt to destroy the right of remonstrance, or restrain the liberty of speech respecting the public measures of public men, by sophistry, artifice, or threats. They may artfully insinuate, that if the people privately complain, or publicly remonstrate, they manifest disaffection, disrespect, and disobedience towards those whom they ought to esteem, revere, and obey.

If this sophistry fail of answering their purpose, they may throw out terrible threats, and positively declare, that all complaints and remonstrances are the high crimes of treason and rebellion. Has not this language for several years past, been used in our Congress, in our State Legislatures, in our proclamations for solemn days of fasting and prayer, in solemn discourses delivered from the pulpit, and in common conversation upon public affairs? Do not those in power, who teach this language, and those who learn and use it, manifest a disposition to destroy the liberty of speech, and with that, all other civil liberties? This language ought to be alarming to a people in a free government, and put them upon their guard against those who would seduce or awe them into silence under all the evils and calamities which their unjust and arbitrary measures have brought upon the nation.

3. It clearly appears from what has been said, that it is our present duty, as a people, to remonstrate with freedom and energy against those measures of our general government, which have brought us to the brink of ruin. During the first twelve years after our federal constitution was established, our rulers devised and pursued such measures as actually promoted our national interest, prosperity, and respectability in the eyes of the world. But ever since the administration of government has fallen into different hands, different measures have been adopted and pursued, which have produced different effects, and thrown the whole country into a distressing and alarming situation. It is our duty now to examine their ill concerted schemes, and call things by their proper names. It is not too much to say that their measures have been unconstitutional, unjust, and extremely oppressive to the people in general. Let us impartially consider their official conduct in these points of view. Did the constitution give them any more power to purchase Louisiana, annex it to the United States, and load the nation with a debt of fifteen millions of dollars, than to sell Georgia to France, or Massachusetts to Great Britain? Did the constitution authorize them to call forth the militia of individual states, to serve in the continental army, and under continental officers, when they were not needed either "to execute the laws of the Union, suppress insurrection, or repel invasion?" Did the dictates of sound reason allow them to multiply new states, which could not fail to alter the centre of union and the balance of power among the original states? Did either justice, impartiality or good policy require them to pass a multiplicity of laws to obstruct commerce, to favor the southern and oppress the northern states? Was it not an abuse of discretionary power to proclaim the repeal of the

Berlin and Milan decrees, when there was no official evidence of their being repealed? And was it not a far greater abuse of discretionary power to withhold from Congress that important information, which would in all probability have prevented the declaration of war? But still, what just right had they to proclaim war with the British nation, whose language, whose religion, and whose interests, not to say their public justice, had disposed them to settle all existing controversies with the American government, upon terms which appeared fair and honorable, even to their own ministers of peace? It was extremely unjust, oppressive and cruel, to plunge the nation into an unnecessary war, in which we had nothing to gain, but every thing to lose.

Now who can deny this to be a true and fair representation of the systematic measures of government for these ten years past? And who can deny that they have destroyed our peace, our prosperity, and shaken the very foundation of all our civil and religious liberties? Shall we then patiently and silently endure these unnecessary, unreasonable, and cruel burdens? Or shall we exercise our natural, unalienable right to complain? It is our present and indispensable duty to remonstrate, in a language and a tone which must be understood and must be felt by the authors of our national calamities. If we neglect to speak with freedom and energy, we shall be accessary to tyranny and oppression, and share in the guilt of destroying the best interests of our country, and of shedding the blood not only of our fellow subjects, but of our unoffending enemies. If the people of Israel would have been inexcusable had they silently suffered Saul to slay his innocent son; or if Esther would have been inexcusable if she had silently suffered herself and her nation to be massacred; then we shall be utterly inexcusable if we hold our peace at such a time as this. The calamities we feel and the dangers we fear, loudly admonish us to exercise our right of remonstrance, and faithfully discharge the solemn and important duty which we owe to ourselves and to our posterity. And to this constitutional mode of seeking redress of the national grievances, from those whose oaths and offices lay them under inviolable obligations to grant it, the subject we are considering suggests the powerful and animating motive,

4. That if we properly remonstrate against the conduct which has brought us into our wretched and dangerous situation, we may reasonably hope to succeed, and speedily effect such a change of men and of measures, as will restore peace, safety, and prosperity to our bleeding country. Decent, just, and spirited remonstrances, have often made deep impressions

upon the hearts and consciences of both good and bad rulers, and prevailed upon them to redress the grievances of their subjects. Haughty and arbitrary as the kings and parliaments of Great Britain may be supposed to have been, they have generally paid respect and attention to the opinions, the feelings, and the complaints of the nation. The proper and united remonstrances of the great body of the people have often been the means of removing corrupt counsellors from the king, corrupt members from parliament, corrupt officers from the army and the navy; and of repealing many unwise, unjust, and oppressive acts of government. Similar causes will produce similar effects, in the moral as well as in the natural world. There is, therefore, good reason to believe, that if the people in the United States would generally and unitedly remonstrate against the unconstitutional, unjust, and oppressive measures, under which we are groaning, we should soon be relieved of our insupportable burdens. If men of all ages, of all conditions, and of all employments, whether sacred, civil, or military, would freely speak their minds at all proper times and in all proper places, and unequivocally express their disapprobation of the past and present conduct of those in power, it would have a powerful influence upon their future measures. The people have no occasion to disobey or rebel. Let them only say, with a strong and united voice, that Jonathan shall not die, that their countrymen shall not be slain, that war shall cease, that peace shall be restored, that commerce shall be encouraged and protected, and that every state in the Union shall be justly and impartially governed, and these desirable and most important events will speedily be brought about. Had the people seasonably and unitedly remonstrated against the declaration of war, it is presumed that it would not have been declared. But there is more reason now, than there was before the war was proclaimed, to object against it, because we have seen and felt the baleful consequences of it. There are, however, some friends to the war and enemies to the liberty of speech, that artfully insinuate, or boldly assert, that since war is actually proclaimed, it is disaffection, disrespect, disobedience, treason, and rebellion against the powers that be, to say a word against it. By this false and absurd language, they have deterred thousands and thousands from speaking in public and in private, what they really think concerning the public measures, which they know and feel to be extremely unjust, unconstitutional, and oppressive. But let all, whether they have been formerly or lately convinced of the mal-administration of government, speak their minds without fear or reserve. This is not only their right, but their duty; nor can they answer it to their own conscien-

ces, if they suffer the fear or favor of man to seduce or awe them into silence. If members of Congress and of the State legislatures, if those who fill the courts of justice, and every class of citizens, would bear their open and united testimony against the public measures, which they verily think have a direct tendency to subject the nation to slavery and ruin, it would open a bright and promising prospect before us. What if an unnecessary, and consequently an unjust and cruel war has been declared? Shall the people silently suffer their property, their liberties, and their lives, to be sacrificed to support it? It is not too late to remonstrate. Saul had pronounced the sentence of death upon Jonathan; but the just and spirited remonstrance of the people finally succeeded, and saved his life. What if our rulers are taking large strides to subvert our free constitution of government, or to throw us into the hands of him, who is attempting to conquer and enslave the whole world? Shall we hold our peace, because it is designed, determined and decreed in the cabinet? No. Let us firmly resolve to discharge our duty to our country, and we may humbly hope that God will disappoint the devices of the crafty, and carry the counsel of the froward headlong.

5. We may fairly infer from what has been said, that our men of eminence, who have uniformly and boldly remonstrated against the ill-concerted measures of government, have acted a noble and patriotic part, and deserve to be highly esteemed and applauded. If we read the farewell address of Washington to the people of the United States; if we read the most enlightened and eloquent speeches made in Congress; if we read the candid and seasonable address of the minority in the House of Representatives, to their constituents, on the subject of the war with Great Britain; or if we read he political writings of many other distinguished statesmen in and out of office; we shall find that they have all spoken the same things, condemned the same measures, and forewarned the nation of their dangerous situation and imperious duty. Among the noble patriots of the present day, our chief magistrate holds a distinguished place. He has absolutely refused to comply with the unconstitutional demands of the supreme executive, and totally declined affording any voluntary aid to the present unnecessary and cruel war. By this bold and faithful discharge of his public trust, he has maintained the independence and safety of the State, and preserved thousands of its inhabitants from the guilt as well as danger, of bearing arms against an unoffending and powerful enemy. All these illustrious characters have deserved well of their country, and ought to be highly respected, for setting the seasonable example of remonstrating against the

conduct of those, who have pursued, and are still pursuing, measures which threaten the ruin of the nation. It is devoutly to be wished that the majority of the people would lay aside their prejudices, and give honor to whom it is due; and in future raise those only to places of power and trust, who are able and disposed to extricate them from the deplorate state into which they have been gradually and insensibly led by their blind or treacherous guides.

Finally, this subject calls upon us to exercise unfeigned gratitude to God for the public and private favors which he has bestowed upon us in this trying and distressing day. We ought to be thankful that he has given us wise and faithful rulers, and by their instrumentality has preserved our rights and liberties, and restrained our powerful enemies from destroying our sea-ports, and spreading misery and destruction among us. We ought to be thankful that he has preserved our lives, and health, and social enjoyments, while so many fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters, widows and orphans, have been sorely bereaved by sickness and the sword, of their dearest relatives, connections and friends. We ought to be thankful that amidst all the embarrassments of trade and business, he has not given us our bread by weight nor our water by measure; but caused the earth to bring forth by handfuls, and closed the year with a rich supply of all the necessaries of life. By these great and discriminating favors God has laid us under the most endearing obligations of gratitude and praise. Let us then fulfil our obligations; let us pay our vows to the Most High; let us present ourselves a living sacrifice to God, which is our reasonable service. This will prepare us to meet him in the future dispensations of Providence. A thick cloud of darkness still hangs over us. We have reason to fear that we have seen and felt only the beginnings of sorrow. If the war should continue, (and every thing threatens its continuance,) we have reason to fear far more distressing times than any we have ever yet seen. We may be called to experience the most fiery trials and to practice the most self-denying duties. It will require peculiar courage, resolution and zeal, to act a proper part under the public calamities brought upon us by those who ought to have sought our peace, our safety, and our prosperity. It may be a great trial to some to speak their minds freely and boldly upon public affairs. It may be a great trial to some to discharge with firmness and fidelity the duties of their important stations. It may be a great trial to some to support the heavy taxes that may be laid upon them. But it may be a much greater trial to others to be compelled to jeopard their lives in the high places of the field,

or to see their children and friends exposed to all the hardships, diseases and dangers of the army. Let us all gird up our minds, and prepare to meet our God. Let us not lean to our own understandings, nor trust in our own hearts, but in the Lord Jehovah, in whom there is everlasting strength. Let us submissively commit ourselves and our country to his wise and holy disposal; and resolve that though he slay us, yet we will trust in him.

SERMON XIX.

THE CHOICE OF THEIR RULERS THE PRIVILEGE OF THE PEOPLE.

NATIONAL THANKSGIVING, APRIL 13, 1815.

And their nobles shall be of themselves, and their governor shall proceed from the midst of them.—Jeremiah, xxx. 21.

The Jews were now in a state of captivity, where they were suffering a just punishment for their abuse of the peculiar favors which they had once enjoyed. Jeremiah, who had often forewarned them of this national calamity, here foretells their happy return to their native land, and to their former privileges, both civil and religious. Among their civil privileges, he mentions that of choosing and enjoying rulers of their own nation. "And their nobles shall be of themselves, and their governor shall proceed from the midst of them." This phraseology imports, that they should not only have, but choose their own rulers from among themselves; which must have appeared a very signal favor to a people, who had long been under the dominion of unjust and absolute tyrants. The plain and obvious truth, which the letter and spirit of the text lead us to consider on this occasion, is,

That it is a great privilege to any people to have the power of choosing their own rulers.

To illustrate and apply this single truth, will be the business of the present discourse.

1. The power of choosing their own rulers is a privilege which but very few of mankind have ever enjoyed. It was a privilege peculiar to the Jews, while they dwelt in their own land and continued a free people. The Egyptians and Baby-

Ionians, the two largest nations then existing, had lost their liberties, and become subject to the most despotic rulers, while the petty states around them were subject to petty tyrants. And from that day to this, usurpation and tyranny have generally prevailed in the world. There is not one nation in all Asia and Africa, which enjoys the power of electing its own rulers; and scarcely one in all Europe, which enjoys this privilege in its full extent. Our civil government is the only one in the world which is completely elective, and which gives the people the right of choosing their own rulers, from the highest to the lowest, without the least restraint. Such a singular privilege is a singular mark of the divine favor, and ought to be considered as the very essence of a free government.

2. The power of choosing their own rulers is a privilege which all nations who are destitute of it wish to enjoy. Though many of them have been so long under arbitrary government that they have lost much of the knowledge, sensibility and spirit of men, and become almost reconciled to their low and servile condition; yet none have become totally indifferent to the treatment which they receive from their fellow mortals. They have some moral sense of right and wrong, of justice and injustice, of mercy and cruelty, of liberty and oppression, which makes them wish for the privilege of choosing their own rulers from among themselves, who would pity their condition, redress their grievances, and give them the rich blessings of civil liberty. How many oppressed nations have, in the course of a few years past, been enraptured and decoyed, at the mere sound of liberty and equality! This demonstrates, that all nations desire national freedom, and would rejoice in possessing the power of choosing the men, who should manage their public concerns. It is, therefore, the united voice of all nations, that the power of choosing their own rulers is a most precious and important privilege.

3. It must be a great privilege to any people, to have the power of choosing their *best* men to rule over them. Some men, among every people, are better qualified than others for places of power and trust; and it is a great privilege to have the power of filling every department of government with those whom they deem the best able and best disposed to promote the public good.

In particular, it is a great privilege for a people to have the power of choosing those into public office, who are best acquainted with their peculiar genius and disposition. Every nation has a national character, with which it is highly necessary that those who rule over them should be well acquainted. Whether civil rulers mean to govern well, or ill, they cannot

attain their object unless they understand human nature in general, and the peculiar genius and disposition of the people whom they attempt to govern. This knowledge, Oliver Cromwell, Charles V., emperor of Germany, and President Washington, possessed in a high degree; and to this peculiar trait in their character, their great success in attaining the different objects of their pursuit was greatly owing. Those eminent rulers knew how to meet the feelings of their subjects, and to select the proper men to carry their deep designs into effect. But by the want of this species of knowledge, Charles I. lost his kingdom and his head, and George III. the colonies of America. The knowledge of men is an indispensable qualification for a good ruler; because all political wisdom is founded upon it. As no man is fit to manage a machine who is ignorant of its nature, construction and use, so no man is fit to manage a people, who is ignorant of their peculiar genius, dispositions, and habits of thinking and acting. It is a great privilege, therefore, for a people to have the power of choosing their wisest men to direct their public affairs. Again,

The right of election gives them a fair opportunity of choosing from among themselves rulers who are the best acquainted with their own laws and constitution of government. This is an extensive branch of political knowledge, and essential to a good statesman. Those who are destitute of this kind of information, however well they may be disposed, are unequal to the task of guiding the helm of government. They may happen to steer right; but it is much more likely that they will steer wrong, and involve the people in great difficulties and dangers, if not in final ruin. No ruler can take his measures wisely, who is not well versed in the laws and constitutions of his country; because he must always keep these in his eye, as a pole star, to direct him to his ultimate end, the public good. Those who administer the government, are always in danger of adopting measures, through ignorance or inattention, which directly or indirectly tend to weaken or destroy the very pillars that support it. No men are qualified for the higher offices of government, but such as clearly understand its constitution, which is designed to limit the powers of both rulers and subjects. And when a people have the right of choosing their own rulers, they may fill the highest offices of government with men who have the largest share of political knowledge and experience.

Again, where a people appoint their own rulers, they have it in their power to put those men into office, who are best acquainted with their various and clashing interests. A civil community which contains a large body of people, scattered

over a large extent of territory, always has local interests, which are various, and apparently, if not really, inconsistent. And it belongs to rulers to consult all these interests, and make them, if possible, the bonds of union and harmony, instead of causes of mutual discord and complaint. But in order to do this, rulers must have a clear and extensive knowledge of such separate and jarring interests. Those who are unacquainted with these, can never know how their laws and regulations will operate, until they have made the experiment, when it may be too late to apply a remedy for their mistakes. Whereas, men of profound political knowledge and experience know how to employ local prejudices and conflicting interests, as so many means of uniting and cementing the members of the body politic. A people, therefore, enjoy a great privilege, when they have the power of appointing such peace-makers to manage their public concerns.

Furthermore, in the free exercise of the power of election, a people may appoint men of *tried integrity* to places of the highest trust and responsibility. Integrity is the first virtue of a civil ruler. "He that ruleth over men must be just," said David, in his dying hour. When a people choose their rulers from among themselves, they have a fair opportunity of knowing the moral principles of their fellow citizens, and of appointing those only to the first offices of government, who have an established character for integrity. Men of principle always establish their character by that time they are qualified, in point of age, to sustain offices of high trust and importance. And it is a divine maxim, that "he that is faithful in the least, will be faithful also in much."

Now, rulers who understand the genius and disposition of their people, who are acquainted with their laws and constitutions, who have a comprehensive view of their various interests and connections, and who are men of tried integrity, are well qualified to fill every department of government. No people can desire better rulers than these; and such as these, the power of election gives them the best opportunity of appointing to office. This must be a very desirable and important privilege, because they can never expect that such rulers will be appointed for them. In absolute monarchies, the distant provinces are obliged to submit to governors appointed for them, who never lived among them; who are ignorant of their customs and manners, their laws and interests; who are destitute of the principles of virtue and integrity; and who seek their own honors and emoluments, more than the peace and prosperity of their subjects. These evils we bitterly experienced, so long as the king of England appointed

our chief magistrates. But when a people are free to choose their own rulers from among themselves, they may, if they please, elect rulers who are both qualified and disposed to seek the public good, and make their constituents prosperous and happy. I must add,

4. That it is a great privilege for a people to have the power of choosing their own rulers, because good rulers are a very great blessing. The power of rulers to do good is very extensive. There is no other order of men, who have all the interests of the people so much in their power. They have greater or less influence over all those things, which can contribute to the outward prosperity and happiness of a civil community. They are the guardians of all that a people hold most dear and sacred; and so can do them greater service, and more essentially promote their temporal good, than any other men in any other public or private stations of life.

The customs and manners of a people have a direct tendency to make them happy or wretched; and these are very much under the controlling influence of civil rulers. Though they are not appointed for this purpose, yet their example has a transforming effect. They are the most respectable members in the community, to whom the lower classes look up for guidance in their common modes of conduct and social intercourse. The court in all civilized nations is the model, according to which the men of wealth and figure mean to form their customs and manners, respecting their dress, their amusements, their language, their equipage, and their various ways of spending their time and property. Rulers, therefore, of correct sentiments, virtuous habits, and exemplary conduct, may do much to promote the general good, without displeasing a single individual by the exercise of legal authority.

Every people hold their religion, whatever it is, as a matter of serious importance. And this also lies within the reach of civil rulers, who always have it in their power directly or indirectly to promote it. If they take it directly into their hands, they can establish what kind of it they please; or if they do not take it directly into their hands, they can in various ways have great influence upon it. Indeed it is a serious truth, that in every age, and in every branch of the christian church, not only the modes and forms, but the kinds of religion, have always taken the complexion of the civil powers for the time being. We know that this has been the case in Europe, and especially in England, where the popish and protestant religions have alternately been the religion of the nation, as either a popish or protestant prince held the reins of government. And it has lately been demonstrated, that infidel rulers will substitute

infidelity in the room of christianity. But it is equally true, that religious rulers will form the religious character of the people. This for nearly two centuries has been demonstrated in New England. Good rulers, therefore, can have a powerful and happy influence upon the great interests of religion, which renders the choice of such rulers of high consequence to the public welfare.

The good of the people requires, that useful knowledge should be generally diffused among them. Their dignity, happiness, and security, greatly depend upon their being well informed. Rulers can easily promote or obstruct the general information of their subjects. In some nations, rulers take pains to keep the people in profound ignorance; which, instead of being the mother of devotion, is the handmaid of despotism. But good rulers will seek to promote every kind of useful knowledge among all classes of citizens. They can oblige them by laws, as well as by public patronage, to cultivate not only the arts, but the sciences, which tend to enlarge their minds, refine their intellectual powers, and form them for useful and happy members of civil society.

The fortunes of a people are in the hands of their rulers. They have authority to determine what sums shall be taken from them for the service of the public; and when the taxes are levied, they have the final and absolute disposal of them. This is a power capable of great abuse. They may drain their subjects of almost all their property, under pretext of discharging public debts, or of promoting the public good. And it is very difficult for the people to discover what use is actually made of the large sums which they contribute for the professed purpose of supporting the safety and credit of the nation. In many countries, rulers riot on the fortunes of their subjects, who are but so many slaves to minister to their luxury and prodigality. But good rulers will be really as well as professedly economical of the property of the people. They will exact no more from them than their own safety, credit, and prosperity, really require. Instead of diminishing, they will aim to increase the wealth of the nation.

There is still another great benefit which a people will receive from good rulers. They will guard their lives as well as fortunes. They have the tremendous power of making war and peace. They can call thousands and thousands into the field of battle, where multitudes may fall together under the most dreadful forms of death. How many millions of the human race have been sacrificed to the ambition and avarice of tyrannical rulers! What rivers of blood have unwise and unrighteous despots spilt! Some princes train up their subjects

for war, and hire them out to be the common butchers of mankind. But good rulers will never wage unjust nor unnecessary wars, nor cruelly sport with the lives of their fellow men, which they esteem as precious as their own.

If these observations are just; if civil rulers have the customs and manners, the religion and learning, and the lives and fortunes, of their subjects in their power; then they will certainly be great and extensive blessings to their constituents, if they wisely and faithfully discharge the important trusts reposed in them. And for this reason it is a very great privilege to a people to have the right of choosing their best men to manage their best interests. It is indeed the sum of all their civil privileges. For without this, all their other privileges may be wrenched from their hands, and turned into engines to work their ruin. Through the mere want of this essential privilege, many great nations, who enjoy the most salubrious climates, the most fertile soils, and the most delicious productions of nature, live but one degree above complete poverty and wretchedness. It is a high and distinguishing privilege which God has bestowed upon us, to choose such men from among ourselves as will guide and govern us according to the integrity of their hearts and skilfulness of their hands.

This subject now suggests several reflections, which are pertinent to the present occasion of rejoicing at the return of national peace.

1. No nation which chooses its own rulers can be enslaved without its own consent. The privilege of election is the grand palladium of civil liberty. The great majority in every nation are utterly opposed to slavery; and therefore, while they possess the power of choosing their own rulers from among themselves, they may always find men of wisdom and integrity, whom they may, if they please, safely invest with power and authority to guard their lives, liberties, and fortunes. Let their form of government be what it may, they can preserve their liberty. If their government be monarchical, yet if they have the power of choosing their prime and subordinate rulers, they may be free. If their government be aristocratical, yet if they have the power of choosing their own rulers, they may be free. If their government be democratical, yet if they have the power of choosing their own rulers from among their best men, they may be free. So long as they possess the power of choosing the guardians of their liberties and rights, they have all the power necessary, and even conceivable, to promote and maintain their civil freedom. If they ever become enslaved, it must be owing to their freely choosing unjust, unwise, and arbitrary rulers.

2. If a people who choose their own rulers have not good rulers, it must be owing to their own fault. If they choose their best men, there can be no doubt but their rulers will be good. And if they choose bad men, it must be because they are themselves corrupt, and wish for rulers whom they desire and expect will gratify their corrupt hearts and promote their corrupt designs. If they wish to have religion destroyed, they will choose those into office who they believe will use their influence to destroy it. If they wish the constitution of government should be weakened, they will put men into power who they expect will adopt and pursue measures to weaken or subvert it. But if a free people ever have bad instead of good rulers, it will be their own fault in abusing the inestimable privilege of election, and they will justly suffer the fatal consequences of their own choice.

3. A people who choose their own rulers, cannot reasonably expect to have better rulers than themselves. Rulers who are chosen by the general suffrage of the people, will always bear the moral complexion of those by whom they are chosen. This has always been found true among every people who have enjoyed and exercised the power of appointing their civil magistrates. While the Grecians were virtuous they chose virtuous rulers. While the Romans were virtuous they chose virtuous rulers. But when those nations became corrupt, they chose corrupt men to guide the affairs of state. The Jews, God's ancient people, conducted in the same manner. The ten tribes would never have chosen Jeroboam the son of Nebat to reign over them, had they not become extremely corrupt. A corrupt people, who enjoy and exercise the power of election, have no ground to expect that their rulers will be better than themselves.

4. This subject directs us where to look for the origin of the political distresses and embarrassments in which we have been, and still are, involved. They have originated from the abuse of the power of election. For more than a century before the revolution, all the states in the Union that enjoyed the privilege of choosing their own rulers, wisely and faithfully improved it, and of course committed the management of their public affairs to such men, as allowed them to live peaceable and quiet lives in all godliness and honesty. And when the federal government was carried into operation, the wisest and best men were placed at the head of the nation. And during twelve years of their administration, the nation enjoyed not only peace and liberty, but the most extraordinary prosperity and flattering prospects. Nor is there the least reason to doubt but that the same prosperity and happiness would have continued to this

day, if the people had not neglected and abused the precious privilege of choosing their own rulers from among their most meritorious citizens. But when they neglected their best men, and chose the worst, their glory departed and their calamities began. Against the solemn, warning voice of some of the best patriots in the Union, they committed the supreme power into the hands of Mr. Jefferson, who had publicly condemned the federal constitution. This they did with their eyes wide open. What an instance of astonishing infatuation! What could they expect but that he would govern according to his own political and religious principles? He fully answered the hopes of some, and the fears of others. He joined affinity with the nation from whence he derived his corrupt principles in religion and politics, and gave a fatal stab to the peace and prosperity of America. Ever since this deplorable crisis in our public affairs, the majority of the nation have uniformly put the chief offices of state into such men's hands, as adopted the measures of Jefferson; and these measures crippled our commerce, dried up the sources of wealth, and finally plunged us into an unnecessary war. which has wasted our property, corrupted the fountains of justice, accumulated our public debts, destroyed thousands of our fellow men, and constrained the government to make a disadvantageous and dishonorable peace. But dishonorable as it is, we had no reason to expect a better. We deserved to be punished, and our enemies have moderately punished us. Now when we look back upon this series of calamities, can we impute the original, procuring cause of them to any thing else than our neglect and abuse of our distinguishing privilege of choosing our own rulers? Our rulers were applauded while pursuing the steps which have brought our calamities upon us, and they are still applauded for the inglorious peace they have obtained. They have acted the part which many of their unwise and deluded electors desired and expected they would act.

5. This subject suggests to us the best, and perhaps the only possible way of alleviating present, and of preventing future calamities. The way is, wisely and faithfully to improve our important privilege of election, and commit the direction of our national concerns to greater and better men. There is no ground to expect that our erroneous rulers either can or will correct their own errors. If they are continued in power, we may justly fear, that instead of lessening they will increase our burdens; and instead of extricating us from, they will plunge us deeper into political embarrassments. Nothing short of a revolution in the administration of government can promote union, preserve peace, and prevent ruin. There is so much

liberty, so much political knowledge, so much patriotism, and so much physical strength, in the sound part of the nation, that they are able in a constitutional manner to displace oppressive and arbitrary rulers. It is to be hoped that the pleasing sound of peace, which brings no positive good, but only mitigates positive evil, will not prove an opiate to lull the people in stupidity and negligence, but serve to animate their exertions for the redress of intolerable burdens. If they sit down quiet now, and relax their efforts for a new and better administration, they may rivet chains which they will never hereafter be able to break. The peace has thrown the nation into the most critical situation that they ever saw. Their wisdom, their prudence, their patriotism and firmness, are put to the severest trial. There are men enough in the nation who possess talents and integrity sufficient to prevent the political ship from sinking, if the helm were only put into their hands. If the large, respectable and powerful minority will only act a wise, steady, dignified part, they may prevent the division and destruction of these once flourishing, but now distressed and impoverished states. Now is the time for the most vigorous and magnanimous exertions for the perpetuation of the present peace and future safety and prosperity of the country. As a few men first laid the foundation for our past and present calamities, so a few men of wisdom, firmness and perseverance, may lay a foundation to retrieve the losses we have sustained, and restore us to our former state of union, harmony, wealth, and rising importance among the nations of the world. Let these few best men be chosen in future to direct the weighty concerns of the nation, and we may confidently hope soon to see better times.

We are certainly under peculiar obligations to employ this, and every other wise and constitutional method, to extricate ourselves from our present embarrassments, and secure our future peace and prosperity.

In the first place, the past goodness of God lays us under indispensable obligation to exert ourselves vigorously for the preservation of the rights and privileges which he has so long bestowed upon us. The President with great propriety acknowledges that we have been, from the beginning of our national existence, the peculiar objects of the divine care and beneficence. It is a plain and pleasing truth, that we have enjoyed the greatest of all civil privileges, the privilege of choosing our own civil rulers. To a wise and vigilant exercise of this invaluable privilege, we may justly ascribe our virtues, our religious fasts and thanksgivings, our general information, our excellent laws, and all our correct customs and habits. By appointing

good rulers, who were qualified for their high stations, these distinguishing traits in our national character have been long preserved, and are not yet entirely lost. It has been owing, under God, to our wise, faithful and pious rulers, that we have been conducted through every stage of our national existence to the high rank which we lately held among the nations of the earth. No people have been from the beginning blessed with greater civil, religious and literary advantages than those which God has liberally bestowed upon us. These call for our unfeigned gratitude to the Father of mercies, and the giver of every good and perfect gift which we have enjoyed, and do still enjoy. Nor can we discharge this great debt of gratitude, unless we use all proper means and exertions to transmit our civil and religious privileges to future generations.

In the next place, the present peace is a signal favor in itself considered. It has put a stop to the effusion of human blood and the calamities of war, and given us more opportunity to attend to our national dangers, and to use our best efforts to avert them. We shall be the most ungrateful, as well as unwise people, if we suffer ourselves to bear the most unjust burdens when it is completely in our own power to obtain justice. Our past success in maintaining our invaluable rights is an encouraging motive to meet every difficulty, and surmount every obstacle, in the way of attaining the freedom and happiness which never fail to flow from a good administration of a good government.

Finally, let us carry our case to God, and implore him to guide and assist us in all our efforts to secure the great objects of our desires, our hopes and pursuit. He can guide the people in the choice of their rulers, and guide the rulers in the choice of their public measures. He has the hearts of both rulers and subjects under his supreme control. He can remove the inveterate prejudice and infatuation which have so long blinded the minds and governed the conduct of well-meaning partisans. Let us therefore not only give thanks to him for the public and private, civil and religious, favors which he has so plentifully bestowed upon us in days past; but also offer up prayers, and supplications, and intercessions, for our President, and for all that are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.

SERMON XX.

THE INFLUENCE OF A GOOD HEART UPON THE CONDUCT OF MEN.

APRIL 4, 1819.

A wise man's heart is at his right hand. — Eccles. x. 2.

Solomon had a clear and discriminating knowledge of all the powers and faculties of the human mind. He knew the distinction between the understanding and the heart; and it was his decided opinion, that the heart, and not the understanding, is the leading faculty of the soul. This appears from his own conduct. When he took the reins of government into his own hands, he most fervently prayed, that he might have "a wise and understanding heart." Though he had the best understanding of any man in the world, yet he durst not lean upon it, or confide in it, to direct him in duty. He knew the heart to be the governing principle of action, and that his own heart would have a greater practical influence upon him than his understanding. Accordingly, we find he lays more stress upon the heart than any other sacred writer. He divides the whole world into wise men and fools, and grounds the distinction, not on the understanding, but on the heart. He calls every person wise, who has a good heart; and every one a fool who has a bad heart. By a wise man he always means a good man; and by a fool he means a bad man. This may help us to understand the meaning of the text. "A wise man's heart is at his right hand; but a fool's heart at his left." A wise man's heart means a good heart, and a foolish man's heart means a bad heart. As the left hand is unused to and unfit for action, so a bad heart is unused to and unfit for duty. But as the right hand is always ready and prompt for action, so a good

heart is always ready and prompt to duty. The wise man's meaning may be easily understood by any one, who can distinguish his right hand from his left. To drop the metaphor, his plain and obvious meaning is this:

A good heart fits men for every kind of duty. I shall

I. Describe a good heart; and,

II. Show that a good heart fits men for every kind of duty.

I. A good heart is something which comprises all moral goodness, or every thing truly virtuous and excellent. God has a good heart, and his good heart comprises all his moral perfections. His heart consists in perfect benevolence. "God is love." His love comprises holiness, justice, goodness, and truth. So a good heart in man consists in true benevolence, and comprises every holy and virtuous affection. And for this reason, the Scripture calls a good heart a perfect heart, a pure heart, an honest heart, an upright heart, a wise and understanding heart. These various epithets denote that variety of holy affections which compose a good heart. A good man's heart feels properly towards all beings and objects in the universe, so far as it is acquainted with them. It loves every thing lovely, and hates every thing hateful. It suffereth long, and is kind; it envieth not; it vaunteth not itself; is not puffed up; doth not behave itself unseemly; seeketh not its own; is not easily provoked; thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things; it never faileth in a single point of duty. It is, in a word, directly opposed to a bad heart, in all its feelings, desires, and pursuits. It is love to God, obedience to his law, submission to his government, confidence in his faithfulness, and hope in his mercy. It prompts to every duty, and restrains from every sin. These are the scriptural and essential characteristics of a good heart. I now proceed to show,

II. That a good heart fits men for every kind of duty.

This will appear from an induction of particulars.

1. A good heart fits men for all *religious duties*. Though there is religion in the performance of every duty, yet all duties are not, strictly speaking, religious duties. These are duties of a certain kind; among which the reading of the Scriptures, devout meditation, and the calling upon God in prayer, may be considered the principal.

A good heart evidently fits men to read the Scriptures. These were indited by the spirit of holiness, and ought to be read with the same spirit with which they were written. Though the doctrines of the Bible are plainly revealed, and approve themselves to every enlightened conscience; yet a

corrupt heart blinds the understanding and conscience, and prevents multitudes from understanding what they read in the Scriptures. But a good heart prepares every one to read them understandingly and practically. It not only renders men more capable of understanding the doctrines and duties of divine revelation, but makes them very willing to know the mind and will of God in his word. This Solomon abundantly teaches in his writings. He says, "The heart of him that hath understanding seeketh knowledge." Again he says, "The heart of the prudent getteth knowledge; and the ear of the wise seeketh knowledge." Again he says, "Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be yet wiser; teach a just man, and he will increase in learning." Again he says, "The wise in heart will receive commandments." Again he says in the name of wisdom, "All the words of my mouth are in righteousness; they are all plain to him that understandeth, and right to them that find knowledge." Again he says, "If thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God; then shalt thou understand righteousness, and judgment, and equity; yea, every good path." And again he says, "A wise man will hear, and will increase in learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels; to understand a proverb, and the interpretation; the words of the wise, and their dark sayings." A good heart is always candid and open to divine truth, and willing to know the doctrines and duties enjoined in Scripture; which fits men to read the Bible with pleasure and spiritual profit. Hence David so often prays, in the 119th psalm, to be taught the knowledge of God's will to his word, and to be enabled to behold wondrous things out of his law. And hence the apostle exhorts men to be renewed in mind in order to know the will of God. "Be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." If men would only read and hear the word of God with a good and honest heart, they would very easily and thoroughly understand the duties and doctrines of christianity. A good heart always fits men to read, understand, and apply the scriptures.

Devout meditation is a religious duty; and a good heart fits men to meditate upon God and divine things with peculiar pleasure and satisfaction. A holy heart delights in meditating upon holy and heavenly objects. David's did; for he repeatedly says to God, "I will meditate of all thy works." "I will meditate in thy precepts." "I will meditate in thy statutes." "I

will meditate in thy word." "My meditation of him," that is, of God, "shall be sweet."

Prayer is another religious duty of the first importance, and a good heart is the very spirit of grace and supplication. The effectual, fervent, prayers of Noah, Job, and Daniel, and of all other good men mentioned in the Bible, flowed from a good heart. Nothing, without this, can fit men to call upon God in a sincere and acceptable manner. Indeed there is no public, private, or secret religious duty, that can be properly performed without a pious heart. God looks at the heart in all religious services; and it is only a pure and upright heart that can prepare men to worship him in spirit and in truth.

2. A good heart fits men for all *secular* as well as religious duties. While men live in this world, they are obliged to attend to worldly affairs. This is a duty which God has required. He commands men to labor six days in a week. A good heart fits men for every secular employment. It disposes them to propose a right end in all their secular concerns, which is, the glory of God and the good of their fellow creatures. So far as men are guided by a good heart, they act from noble and benevolent motives in all their pursuits. They perform their daily business as a daily duty. Whatever they do, they do it heartily, as to the Lord and not unto men. They realize that the common concerns of life must be pursued, as pre-requisite to all other duties; and in subordination to their more important spiritual interests. This sanctifies all their labors, and renders their plowing, and sowing, and reaping, and all their other secular employments, acceptable to God.

Besides, a good heart makes men cheerfully and delightfully perform their secular business. Though it be naturally a burden and the fruit of the curse; yet since God has ordained that they shall live by the sweat of the brow, and support themselves and others by actual labor, they are willing to exhaust their health and strength in promoting the designs of Providence and the general good of mankind.

3. A good heart fits men for all *social* duties. They are formed for society; and are under a necessity, on account of their mutual dependence, of maintaining a social intercourse with one another. Familiar conversation is a duty which is common to all persons; and a good heart is the best guide in the discharge of this duty. They are all accountable for every word they speak. They ought to weigh their words, and let no communication proceed out of their mouths but that which is good, to the use of edifying. And if their hearts be good, their conversation will be good. "For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." The heart always moves the

tongue. Hence says Solomon, "The heart of the wise teacheth his mouth, and addeth learning to his lips." Again he says, "The tongue of the just is as choice silver, the heart of the wicked is little worth." Again, "The lips of the righteous feed many: but fools die for want of wisdom." Again, "The mouth of the just bringeth forth wisdom: but the froward tongue shall be cut off." Again, "The lips of the righteous know what is acceptable: but the mouth of the wicked speaketh frowardness." A good heart naturally prompts any person to speak with propriety on all occasions. This was strikingly exemplified in all the discourses of Christ. His heart was perfectly good; and accordingly all that he said was always proper, pertinent, and edifying. He knew how to speak a word in season to every person; and none but gracious words ever fell from his lips.

A good heart fits men for all their dealings with one another. When the heart is right, they seek each other's good as their own. A good heart dictates to every man, to do to others as he would that others should do to him. True benevolence unites the affections and interests of mankind; and while they feel thus united, they have no design to injure one another in person, property, or character. A kind, benevolent heart, fits every one to be fair, faithful, and upright in all his dealings with his fellow-men.

And as mankind stand in various relations to each other, so a good heart fits men to discharge all the duties which result from those relations. Those whose hearts are benevolent, are willing to give honor to whom honor is due; obedience to whom obedience is due; submission to whom submission is due; and condescension to whom condescension is due. A good heart prompts every one to treat his superiors, his inferiors, and his equals, with propriety. Hence a good heart will make good rulers and good subjects; good parents and good children; good masters and good servants; good ministers and good people. A good heart is ready for every social duty, and naturally prompts those who possess it, to speak and act with propriety, in all companies, in all places, in all stations, and in all relations of life. It makes men quick to discover and practice the duties which they owe to each other.

4. A good heart fits men for *doubtful* duties, or duties in doubtful cases. Men are often thrown into a state of doubt, and are really at a loss respecting their duty. Sometimes they are in doubt what to believe; sometimes what to say; and sometimes what to do. In all such cases, a good heart is a good guide. So Solomon represents it. "Righteousness keepeth him that is upright in his way;" that is, in the way

of his duty. And again, "The wisdom of the prudent is to understand his way." A good heart was a constant guide to Christ, on the most sudden emergencies and perplexing occasions. It made him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord, and to deal prudently, as it was foretold that he should; and to speak and act wisely at all times, and under all circumstances. And a good heart has the same happy influence upon all who possess it. If any are at a loss whether to embrace or reject any religious sentiment proposed, they have a standard in their own breasts, by which to try it. It is only to appeal to their own conscience, and ask, What says benevolence in this case? Is this doctrine agreeable to disinterested benevolence, or is it an expression of selfishness? All true doctrines are according to godliness, or disinterested benevolence; but all false doctrines are according to selfishness, and tend to promote and gratify it. And therefore the good man's heart is always at his right hand, and ready to decide what is true, and what is false. If men are at a loss what to say on any important occasion, let them ask what benevolence says; and a benevolent heart will naturally remove their doubts, and dictate the words of wisdom. Or if men are at a loss whether to act, or not to act; to do this, or to do that, in any particular case; let them ask what benevolence says, and benevolence will certainly lead them right. There are no doubtful cases in the course of life, but what may be practically and sufficiently solved, by an honest, upright, benevolent heart. The scripture leaves a vast many things to human discretion, without any express precept, prohibition, or example, to determine what is truth or falsehood, or what is right or wrong. And, in respect to all such things, a good heart is a good and constant guide. All who follow this guide will always keep within the bounds of duty, and do what is acceptable to Him who looketh on the heart. Benevolence will always seek and follow the best light, and do what is best on every supposable occasion.

5. A good heart fits men for *difficult* duties. There is a great variety of difficult duties, but I shall mention only two sorts; dangerous duties, and self-denying duties. These have always been difficult to perform. But a good heart will make them easy and pleasant, and dispose men to perform them with a degree of alacrity and delight. True benevolence easily surmounts such difficulties. A good heart has often led good men to perform the most dangerous duties. It was a dangerous duty for Moses and Aaron to go to Pharaoh, and in the name of God to demand the deliverance of the children of Israel from under his powerful and oppressive hand. And at first, they seemed to shrink from the ser-

vice assigned them. But their supreme love to God, and disinterested benevolence to their nation, groaning under insupportable burdens, animated them to disregard the wrath of the king, and surmount every danger in the path of duty. It was a dangerous duty for David to enter into a single combat with Goliah, who had defied the armies of the living God; but a good heart prompted him to attempt and do it. It was a dangerous duty, for the three worthies to draw water for David in the very camp of his enemies; but a good heart emboldened them to jeopard their lives to gratify the desires, and relieve the sufferings, of their beloved prince. It was a dangerous duty for Esther, the queen, to go into the presence of the king uninvited; but her love to God and to her people inspired her with courage to risk her life to save her nation. It was a dangerous duty for Elijah to go to Ahab, whom he knew to be seeking his life; but a good heart disposed him to put his life in his hand, and go. And it was a dangerous duty for Paul to go to Jerusalem, where he knew his mortal enemies were; but a good heart made him cheerfully resolve and say, "Behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there; save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying, that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God."

Self-denying duties are often extremely difficult, whether attended with danger or not; but a good heart will dispose men to a ready and cheerful performance of the most signal acts of self-denial. The Scriptures abound with instances of this kind. Abraham is the first that occurs. It must have been an extremely self-denying duty for him to offer up his son a burnt sacrifice to God; but a good heart made him readily understand, and as readily obey, this extraordinary and trying command. It was a self-denying duty for the Shunamite to submit to the will of God in bereaving her of her darling child; but a good heart dictated a proper expression of it on the occasion. She felt and said, "It is well." It was a self-denying duty for Job to submit his will to the will of God, under his great and singular and complicated sufferings; but a good heart prepared him to feel and say, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." It was a self-denying duty for Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, to refuse to bow down to a dumb idol, at the mouth of the burning fiery furnace; but under the influence of a good heart, they felt easy and happy in doing it. "We are not careful, O king, to

answer thee in this matter." It was a good heart which moved Daniel to deny himself, and pray openly three times in the day, when he knew it exposed him to be torn in pieces in a den of lions. It required great self-denial in Peter and the other apostles to preach the gospel openly and boldly in the face of a frowning world; but a good heart made them resolve to obey God, rather than man. Our blessed Saviour had a heart perfectly good, and it led him to take up his cross from the beginning to the end of his life, with real pleasure and satisfaction. "It is my meat, says he, to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." And again he says, "I delight to do thy will, O God, yea, thy law is within my heart." The eleventh of Hebrews exhibits a catalogue of good men, whose benevolent hearts prompted them to the most signal acts of self-denial, through the whole course of their pilgrimage on earth. God has never enjoined any duty upon men, too dangerous or too self-denying for them to perform, under the influence of a good heart. A good heart is a complete qualification for every duty. So David thought when he said to God, "I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart." The more God increases benevolence in the hearts of men, the more they extend their views, and desire to do every thing which they believe the good of the universe requires. "Every wise man's heart, therefore, is at his right hand," and continually prompting him to do every kind of duty, which either the word or providence of God requires him to do.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. If a good heart fits men for every kind of duty, then they can never find a solid and satisfactory excuse for their ignorance or neglect of duty. If what has been said be true, that a good heart fits men for doubtful duties, they have no excuse for not knowing their duty in doubtful cases. They are not obliged to know what they are incapable of knowing, or to judge from evidence which is not exhibited before them. But they are obliged to seek for the best evidence in their power, and to judge and act agreeably to it. A child seven years old is as capable of knowing his duty in any particular case, as Solomon was of knowing his duty towards his numerous subjects, in any given case. Solomon did not know every thing, any more than a child; and he freely acknowledged before God, that he was but a child, in respect to knowledge. Hence it has become a universal maxim, "to err is human." But involuntary error is no fault. Men may always know their duty, without either omniscience or infallibility. If cases occur

to the learned or unlearned, to the young or the old, which require them to weigh evidence in favor of and against any truth; or in favor of and against any particular mode of conduct; the duty of every individual is to compare reasons for and against, with impartiality; and to act according to the best evidence. God never did, nor will, place any intelligent creature in such a situation, that it is naturally impossible to know his duty. If any, therefore, either mistake or neglect their duty, it is always owing to some corruption of the heart, or criminal motive. This holds true, with respect both to principles and practice. No persons whether learned or unlearned, whether young or old, can find a solid and satisfactory excuse for disbelieving any doctrine or duty of the gospel; or for neglecting to do any thing, which their duty requires them do. Their voluntary ignorance affords no excuse, and their voluntary neglect affords no excuse. This applies to all who pretend to be in doubt, whether it be their duty to maintain family prayer; or whether it be their duty to come to the communion table; or whether it be their duty to restrain their children from sinful practices; or whether it be their duty to support good government; or whether it be their duty to exert themselves to prevent the propagation of what they believe to be dangerous errors; or whether it be their duty to use their influence and employ their property, to propagate the gospel among their fellow men, who are famishing and perishing for lack of vision. A good heart would remove all these doubts, and therefore they afford no excuse for the neglect of duty.

2. If a good heart fits men for all kinds of duty, then those who have a good heart, will be very apt to make it *appear* that their heart is good. Men never fail to discover their right hand, whether it be on their right or left side. It is that hand which they most habitually, easily, and spontaneously use. And since a good heart is at the right hand of those who possess it, they will habitually, easily, and spontaneously discover it by their words and actions, which flow from it. While a good heart leads men to understand and practice every kind of duty, their external conduct is an index of their internal holiness of heart. So our Saviour requires us to consider it. "A good man out of the good treasure of the heart, bringeth forth good things." While a good man's heart is at his right hand, it is as easy and natural for him to think, and speak, and act right, as it is to use his right hand; and the ease and alacrity with which he discharges every kind of duty, discover his heart, which governs his thoughts, and words, and actions. It is this intimate connection between the heart and the hand, and the external conduct, which naturally discovers the goodness of

a good heart in those who possess it. They can no more help discovering the goodness of their heart, in a greater or less degree, by their external conduct, than they can help discovering their right hand, by the free and frequent use they make of it. If their heart be pure, it will make them appear to be the salt of the earth; and if their heart be good, they will make it appear, by their good works, that they are the light of the world.

3. If a good heart fits men for every kind of duty, then those who have a bad heart will be very apt to show it. Men are as apt to discover their left hand as their right hand. They discover it both by not using it, and by attempting to use it without ease and dexterity. As a good heart fits men for duty, so a bad heart unfits them for duty. It sometimes prevents their understanding their duty, but more frequently prevents their doing what they know to be their duty. Both their ignorance and neglect discover an evil heart at their left hand. So Solomon reasons upon the subject: "A wise man's heart is at his right hand," he says, "but a fool's heart at his left. Yea, also when he that is a fool walketh by the way, his wisdom faileth him, and he saith to every one that he is a fool." Bad men generally wish and endeavor to conceal the badness of their hearts; and many by care and circumspection, do in a great measure keep their hearts out of sight; though their habitual and general course of conduct often discovers the broad road in which they are walking. Means and ends are closely connected; and those who are ultimately seeking worldly ends, will employ the means adapted to obtain the objects of their pursuit. Those who have bad hearts are extremely apt to discover them far more than they imagine. The fruits of a bad heart are as visible as the fruits of a good heart. And Christ teaches us, that bad fruits are an index of a bad heart. "Either make the tree good, and his fruit good, or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by his fruit. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart, bringeth forth good things; and an evil man out of the evil treasure, bringeth forth evil things." Those who try to hide a bad heart, will generally, by their negligence, or inconsistency of conduct, discover that their spots are not the spots of God's children.

4. If a good heart fits men for all kinds of duty, then those who are destitute of it, do no duty at all in the sight of God. All who have not a good heart, have a bad heart, which unfits them for every duty, and entirely prevents them from doing any thing that is pleasing and acceptable to God. It is a carnal heart, which is enmity against God, not subject to his law, neither indeed can be. It is a selfish heart, which is itself a transgression of the law of love. It is a heart which corrupts every

thought, and word, and action which springs from it. It is a heart which is repugnant to every duty which a man owes to God, to his neighbor, and to himself, and turns every thing he does into sin. If he plows, his plowing is sin; if he prays, his praying is sin; or if he fasts, his fasting is sin. God expressly condemns the best services of sinners. He complains of his people of old for "drawing nigh unto him with their mouths, and honoring him with their lips, while their hearts were far from him." He asks them, "Who hath required this at your hand to tread my courts?" And immediately adds, "Bring no more vain oblations." Christ holds the same language to the Scribes and Pharisees. "Ye pay tithe of mint, and anise, and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone." And Paul will not allow that a man does any duty, while destitute of a good heart, though he has ever so much knowledge, or does ever so many good deeds, or even suffers martyrdom. But sinners are extremely apt to think and say, that they do a part, though not the whole of their duty. This is because they imagine that their external conformity to the divine commands is good, though their hearts be bad; which is contrary both to Scripture, and the enlightened dictates of their own consciences. This is self-deception, which genuine conviction of sin never fails to destroy, and to plunge the self-deceiver into the gall of bitterness and bonds of iniquity.

5. If a good heart fits men for all kinds of duty, then good men find a pleasure in performing every kind of duty. It is easy to believe that those who love God supremely must take delight in drawing near to him, in contemplating upon him, in reading his word, and in attending his ordinances. It is easy to believe that in eating and drinking and doing every thing to his glory, they find a pleasure in their secular employments, which others do not. And it is easy to believe that those who love their fellow men as themselves find a pleasure in social duties, which those who live wholly to themselves do not. The performance of dangerous and self-denying duties affords good men the greatest delight and satisfaction. Moses enjoyed more pleasure in suffering affliction with the people of God, than in discharging his duties in the court of Pharaoh. Paul and the apostles, who performed the most difficult, dangerous, and self-denying duties, enjoyed far more happiness than any of their successors in preaching the gospel. The reason is, their hearts were constantly at their right hand. Dangerous and self-denying duties put a good heart in more constant exercise than more common and more easy duties. Thus those

whose heart is at their right hand find more happiness in the performance of all their religious, secular, social, dangerous, and self-denying duties, than other men. And this fully explains Solomon's declaration: The ways of wisdom "are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." It is a groundless prejudice, which both young and old sinners imbibe and cherish, that it would destroy their happiness to become religious, and serve God instead of themselves.

6. If a good heart fits men for every duty, then all good men desire to grow in grace. They desire grace, not merely on account of the spiritual enjoyment that grace affords them, but principally because it fits them for every duty towards God and man. They know by experience, that the more grace they have, the more prepared they are for every good work. Paul was sensible, that without Christ, he could do nothing; but, through his strengthening grace, he could do all things. This led him to pray, that when he was weak, then he might be strong; strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. It is the moral weakness of christians to do their duty, that makes them most sensible how very imperfect they are in their attainments in grace. How often do they find their heart at their left hand, when they need it at their right hand! How often are they embarrassed with doubts respecting duty! How often do they shrink from difficult and self-denying duties! How often does their good heart fail them, and their bad heart lead them to negligence and disobedience! Such unhappy and painful effects of their weakness in grace, excites them to read, to pray, and use all the means of growing in grace. Read the one hundred and nineteenth Psalm, in which David prays, in every varied form, for quickening, enlightening, strengthening, and consoling grace. Christ's disciples realized the weakness of their faith, and prayed him to increase it. Good men are not satisfied with the bare performance of mere external service, and therefore feel the need of internal grace to perform every duty.

7. If a good heart fits men for every duty, then those who are destitute of it continually live in darkness. Their evil heart prevents them from desiring to know and from understanding their duty, in a vast many cases. They are generally involved in moral darkness. Hence Solomon says, "The way of the wicked is as darkness: they know not at what they stumble." But when they are not involved in darkness, their evil heart is fully set in them to do evil, and disobey every divine command. This is certainly a very deplorable situation.

But who are in this situation? Let all examine; for all may know.

Those whose heart is at their right hand, have found the benefit of it, in discovering duty, and in rendering duty easy and pleasant.

Those who are involved in ignorance and disobedience, may know that their heart never has been at their right hand. But is this a calamitous state? No. Every one may come out of it, if he chooses. Let all choose whom they will serve.

Here consider how little good you have done; how much evil you have done; and how much good you may yet do, to yourselves and to others.

SERMON XXI.

REVOLUTION AND REFORMATION.

ANNUAL THANKSGIVING, DECEMBER 2, 1819.

I WILL overturn, overturn, overturn it; and it shall be no more, until he come whose right it is; and I will give it him.—EZEK. xxi. 27.

THOUGH this prediction has particular reference to Zedekiah, the last king of Israel, and foretells his utter ruin, yet there is reason to think that it ultimately respects Jesus, the king of the Jews. For Zedekiah had no successor to his throne, as a king of the ten tribes, who were, upon his captivity and death, carried to Babylon, and dispersed all over the world, and still continue in their dispersion. The successor, therefore, to whom God promised to give the government, was undoubtedly the Prince of Peace, whose way God meant to prepare by great revolutions and changes among the nations of the earth. This appears from what the prophet says in connection with the text. "And thou profane, wicked prince of Israel, whose day is come, when iniquity shall have an end, thus saith the Lord God: remove the diadem and take off the crown; this shall not be the same; exalt him that is low, and abase him that is high. I will overturn, overturn, overturn it; and it shall be no more, until he come whose right it is, and I will give it him." This is a prediction that the crown, the diadem, and every mark of royal authority should be taken away from Zedekiah, who had forfeited it, and given to him who was to come, and who when he came would have a supreme right to govern not only the Jews, but all the nations of the earth. And who could this be, but the promised Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, whom God had

promised to set as King on his holy hill of Zion? Taking the text in this sense, it leads us to conclude,

That God will bring about the glorious reign of Christ, by overturning all things that stand in the way of it. I shall inquire,

I. What things do stand in the way of the glorious reign of Christ.

II. By what means God will overturn or remove the things which stand in the way of Christ's reign. And,

III. Why we may confidently expect that he will effect his gracious design.

I. Let us inquire what things do now stand in the way of Christ's glorious reign. These may be comprised in the following particulars.

1. Every species of tyranny stands in the way of the glorious reign of Christ. His reign will be a reign of righteousness and peace, to which every species of tyranny stands diametrically opposed. Both civil and ecclesiastical tyrants always have been and still are hostile to the reign of Christ. As soon as Christ set up his kingdom, all the kingdoms of the world being tyrannical, were unitedly opposed to his subjects and to his kingdom, and employed all their power and influence to prevent its enlargement and establishment. And all pagan and Mohammedan governments are still tyrannical, and still hostile to the kingdom of Christ, and many christian nations are more or less tyrannical, and consequently more or less hostile to the pure and peaceable government of Christ. Civil tyranny in every nation and in every form, stands in the way of the glorious reign of Christ, and so does all ecclesiastical tyranny. This early prevailed in the christian church, and has been carried to a greater height than any civil tyranny ever has been. The christian clergy soon began to usurp unchristian authority, and gradually carried it to higher and higher claims, till the Pope presumed to be the universal and supreme head of the Church, and to exercise a right to govern and put down the greatest kings in christendom. Though such exorbitant ecclesiastical tyranny has been considerably checked and restrained in later times, yet it still predominates in all popish countries, and has no small influence in every part of the christian world. And just so far as it exists, it is entirely hostile to the spread of the gospel, and the approaching reign of Christ. Every species of tyranny in every part of the world, is one thing that stands in the way of the reign of the Prince of Peace.

2. Idolatry, or the worship of false gods, stands directly in the way of the spread and prosperity of Christ's kingdom. This has been, and still is, practiced by the great majority of

mankind in ten thousand forms. All the pagan, Mohammedan and popish nations are idolaters; and their idolatry is generally closely connected and interwoven with their various forms of government; which renders it one of the most powerful and irresistible enemies to Christ and his cause. It has banished christianity from a great part of Europe, Asia and Africa, where it once flourished and prevailed. Men must be cured of their idolatry, before they can or will embrace the gospel of Christ.

3. Infidelity stands perfectly opposed to the universal spread of christianity. Though there are different degrees and shades of infidelity, yet every species of it stands in the way of building up and enlarging the kingdom of Christ. "For what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?" Infidelity has greatly prevailed of late years in France, in Germany, in Britain and America. Though in one way it has been checked, yet in another way it has been cherished and promoted, even by men of profound learning and reputation. German divines are doing much to spread infidelity, and some other divines are paving the way to it. This then is at present a great and growing obstacle to the promotion of the cause and kingdom of Christ.

4. Heresy, or the disbelief of the great and fundamental doctrines of the gospel, has been and still is a great obstacle to the propagation of the christian religion in the world. It alienates the affection, diverts the attention, weakens the hands, and cools the zeal of those who profess to be concerned for the spread of the gospel, and for the coming of Christ in his kingdom. There never was a time, perhaps, when professed christians were more divided in their religious sentiments, and more zealous to proselyte others to their favorite and false opinions, than at this day. This obstacle must be removed before "the Lord shall be king over all the earth, and his name shall be one." Our next inquiry is,

II. By what means we may suppose God will overturn or remove all these things which stand in the way of the glorious reign of Christ. As the things to be overturned, or the obstacles to be removed, are various, so we may suppose God will employ various means to prepare the way for the coming of Christ in his latter day glory. In particular,

1. By public calamities, or desolating judgments. This is plainly intimated by the prophet Isaiah. "Who is this that cometh from Edom; with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save."

"Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the wine-fat? I have trodden the wine press alone; and of the people there was none with me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury, and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment." Similar threatenings against the enemies of Christ we find in all the prophets under the Old Testaments. And if we look into the book of Revelation, we there find Christ sending forth seven angels as executioners of wrath against his enemies. And it appears that God intends to overturn kingdoms and nations who oppose the kingdom of his Son, by the sword, by the pestilence and famine, the common weapons of his indignation. These are proper means to destroy both civil and ecclesiastical tyranny, and have been used in our day in Europe and America, to answer these purposes.

2. We may suppose that God will employ human learning to enlighten the minds of ignorant, barbarous, tyrannical and erroneous nations in respect to their civil and religious tyranny, and their absurd and vicious customs and manners. Human literature has done much since the dark ages to civilize and humanize the kingdoms and nations of Europe. And the knowledge of the arts and sciences always has had a salutary effect upon all nations who have cultivated this kind of knowledge. And commerce is constantly spreading wider and wider the knowledge of the useful arts and sciences all round the world. This, God may cause to increase more and more rapidly, to carry on his great design of giving to Christ "the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession."

3. We may be confident that God will employ the gospel as the principal external instrument to overthrow and remove all obstacles in the way of Christ's final and most glorious reign upon earth. This is suited at once to enlighten the understandings, awaken the consciences, and subdue the hearts of all who are opposed to the kingdom of Christ. Accordingly, the subjects of his kingdom are commanded to spread the gospel through the world, for this purpose. The command is, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." Accordingly, John says, "I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people." This prediction has been, and is now emphatically fulfilling. And when it is completely fulfilled, most or all the obstacles in the way of the universal kingdom of the Redeemer will be removed; though

the mere knowledge of the gospel will not remove the infidelity and obstinacy of the human heart. And this leads me to observe,

4. That God will pour out his spirit as the efficient cause of making all the other means that have been mentioned effectual, "to the pulling down of strong holds, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." This extraordinary effusion of the divine spirit, Ezekiel predicted under the emblem of the holy waters which issued out from under the threshhold of the temple, which gradually spread wider and rose higher, till they became a river that could not be passed over. It only remains to inquire,

III. Why we may confidently expect that God will accomplish his gracious design of giving the kingdom to his Son by the means that have been mentioned? To this I answer,

1. Because these are the means which he has hitherto usually employed for accomplishing this purpose. This has been the great purpose which he has been constantly pursuing for nearly six thousand years past, and these are the means which he has steadily employed to accomplish it; though he has on certain occasions miraculously interposed to retard or divert the course of nature. He overturned or destroyed one nation and kingdom after another, from the time his people left Egypt till the incarnation of Christ, to prepare the way for that great event. And ever since his resurrection and ascension to heaven, he has been overturning and destroying one kingdom after another, to open the way for a wider spread of the gospel, and a more extended dominion of Christ. He has never perhaps more signally and awfully employed wars, famine and pestilence in carrying on his design, than in the course of twenty years past. The world has been in arms, and millions have been destroyed, and rivers of blood have been shed by the civil and religious tyrants of the earth. At the same time many have run to and fro, and knowledge of every kind has been increased. If we may judge from the analogy of divine providence for many thousand years past, we may conclude that God will continue to employ the same means to accomplish the same end, until he has completely obtained his object.

2. We may confidently expect this, because he can make the means which have been mentioned effectually answer his great purpose in view. All these means are adapted to bring about those external and internal revolutions among mankind that will effectually destroy their tyranny, idolatry, infidelity

and heresy. They have produced these effects in respect to individuals and large communities in the christian world. The tyrannical and idolatrous nations of the earth have the same disposition and power to destroy one another that ever they had; and it is only for the supreme Governor of the world to withhold restraints and exhibit motives, and they will voluntarily imbrue their hands in each other's blood, and destroy themselves, to open the way for the return of the Jews, and the spread of the gospel. And it is only for God to put it into the hearts of christians, to employ the means and opportunities given them, to spread the knowledge of Christ through every quarter of the globe. We can see no occasion for miracles, in order to bring on Christ's universal reign. We may, therefore, justly expect that God will employ no other means than desolating judgments, human knowledge, divine truth, and the irresistible influence of his spirit, in overturning civil and ecclesiastical tyranny, pagan and popish idolatry, Jewish and christian infidelity, and the errors and delusions in the gospel church, which are the great apparent obstacles, which lie in the way of the millennial reign and glory of Christ, and the universal holiness and happiness of his kingdom on earth. And since God can, by the means that have been mentioned, give the kingdom to his Son, we may confidently expect that he will; for,

3. He has expressly promised to do it. There are many promises to this import, but I will mention only two or three. In the second Psalm we read, "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel against the Lord, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder and cast away their cords from us. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure. Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." Again we read in the eleventh Psalm, "The Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool. Rule thou in the midst of thine enemies. Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." God says in the text, "I will overturn, overturn, overturn it, and it shall be no more, until he come whose right it is, and I will give it him." The prophet Daniel says, "I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of Man came with

the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed." These predictions and promises pledge the veracity and faithfulness of God, and cannot fail, unless the divine veracity and faithfulness should fail. Though there are, in appearance, great and formidable obstacles in the way of the fulfilment of these promises, yet God can, with infinite ease, remove them. He has supported and enlarged the kingdom of Christ amidst greater difficulties and obstacles than any that yet remain to be surmounted. Besides, God has no greater object to promote than the cause and kingdom of Christ, and none which lies so near his heart. His own glory and blessedness are involved in the enlargement, prosperity, and felicity of Christ's kingdom among men, whom he sent to redeem and save. We may, therefore, confidently expect that God will overturn, and overturn, and overturn, until the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. If the things, which now stand in the way of the glorious reign of Christ, must be removed in the manner that has been mentioned, before his reign commences, we have no reason to think that his kingdom will soon come. It is strictly true that God has been preparing the way for the reign of Christ in his millennial glory, ever since he made the promise that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. God governed the natural and moral world, from Adam to Moses, in reference to the coming of Christ, and from Moses to the incarnation of Christ, to prepare the way for the enlargement of his kingdom. And ever since the gospel day, God has been overturning kingdoms and destroying nations, to bring forward the universal reign of his Son. Still great and numerous obstacles remain to be removed, before his glorious kingdom can properly be said to come. And these obstacles are to be removed by the instrumentality of mankind, the great majority of whom are heartily engaged to oppose the reign of Christ. But allowing, that God can make his enemies free and voluntary instruments in promoting his cause which they hate; and supposing he should raise up many pious men and pious preachers to espouse his cause with all their hearts; yet thousands of friends and foes, cannot, according to the common

course of things, destroy all tyranny, all the idolatry, all the infidelity, and all the errors and declensions, which abound all over the world, in a few years. The removal of these obstacles must be a work of time, and of a longer time than forty or fifty years, which some suppose will bring on the millennium. I know God can, in a scriptural sense, hasten the time of the latter-day glory. Though God can do what he does without means, instantaneously; yet he cannot bring about events so rapidly by the instrumentality of weak and short-sighted men. Supposing God should do ten-fold more in fifty years to come, than he has done in fifty years past, can we suppose that then all the obstacles in the way of Christ's universal reign would be removed? It has been the general opinion of the most learned and judicious divines, that the millennium will not commence until the year two thousand. As there were two thousand years before the law, and two thousand years under the law, so they have supposed, that there would be two thousand years under the gospel, before the millennium would commence; and that the seventh thousand years would be the thousand years of the millennium. And if we may judge according to the analogy of providence, and the present state of the world, we have no great reason to think that this opinion is far from the truth.

2. If God has done so much already, and will do a great deal more to prepare the way for the coming of Christ in his millennial glory, then we may justly expect, that the world will be very happy under the reign of the Prince of Peace. Without indulging a vain imagination respecting ten thousand things, which may, or may not, take place in that glorious day, we may know, that the world will be far more happy then than it ever has been before. For if God only removes the obstacles that always have existed, and still lie in the way of the universal reign of Christ, the world will be vastly ameliorated. Only let universal freedom succeed universal tyranny; the universal worship of the one only living and true God, succeed every species of gross idolatry; the universal belief of the holy scriptures, succeed the present prevalent infidelity; and an entire union in the belief and love of the great and fundamental doctrines of the gospel, succeed the heresy and bigotry that now prevails among nominal christians, and the world must be unspeakably more happy than it ever has been, or is now. If God "shall overturn, and overturn, and overturn," till these great and desirable revolutions in the moral world shall take place, mankind must be very happy, whether he makes any remarkable changes in the material world or not. We know, "that while the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest, and

cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night, shall not cease;" and there is but very little reason to expect, that these seasons will be much altered in the time of the millennium. For if summer and winter, cold and heat, should be much varied, seed-time and harvest would probably cease, which would involve the world in distress, if not in ruin. It is mere fancy that leads many to suppose, that all the natural evils of life will be removed, and perfect prosperity, ease, and affluence will universally prevail. If men will not then be perfectly holy, they will need natural evils to try and purify their hearts. For imperfectly holy creatures cannot bear perfect prosperity and happiness. But mankind will be sufficiently happy in the present state, when liberty, peace, and harmony, shall flow from universal piety. Pure and universal religion will be the supreme glory and felicity of the peaceful reign of the Prince of Peace. All men both good and bad appear greatly pleased with the prospect of a thousand happy years; but all the unholy will be as much disappointed at Christ's coming in his glorious kingdom, as the Jews were at his coming in the flesh.

3. If God will remove the obstacles which still lie in the way of the latter-day glory of Christ in the manner that has been mentioned, then good men have a great deal to do, to promote this great and good design. Their work will probably become more and more difficult and dangerous, as the event draws nearer and nearer. For as the nature of it will be better and better understood, opposition to it will become stronger and stronger. How many of the Jews were highly pleased with Christ as the promised Messiah, before they understood his holy and benevolent purpose in coming into the world! but as soon as they understood it, they turned into bitter and mortal enemies to him. So notwithstanding the great zeal that all denominations of men and of christians are manifesting in favor of the universal spread of the gospel, as preparing the way for the glorious millennium, it is to be expected, by and by, they will have juster notions of that great event, and realize that it will be death to all their selfish and worldly hopes; and when they realize this, they will naturally oppose it with all their hearts. And when the tyrannical and idolatrous kingdoms of the world see their darling objects at stake, they will not be so ready to admit the heralds of the gospel among them, and it will not be so safe for them to go. And when the enemies of Christ, who now join with his friends in promoting his cause, leave them and oppose them, they will have greater and more formidable difficulties and dangers to surmount, which will call for more courage, more resolution, more zeal, and more laborious exertions. It is but a small thing to afford

pecuniary aid to the cause of Christ, in comparison with other things which they will have to do, in order to promote it. But,

4. It appears from what has been said, that christians have great encouragement to exert themselves vigorously and wisely, in preparing the way for the glorious reign of Christ. God will be with them, while they are with him. He has pledged his faithfulness to remove all obstacles out of the way, and he is faithful and powerful, who has promised. And he will make the kingdom as great, and glorious, and happy, as any can anticipate. Let his friends, then, be vigorous, and prepare to meet and overcome all opposition. But let them not lean to their own understanding in choosing the means of promoting his cause. Here christians have greatly failed. They have sincerely, but unwisely, adopted measures which have proved injurious to the cause they meant to promote. Christians early formed larger and larger unions, in order to give them more courage and strength to oppose the enemies of Christ, and in that way to promote his cause; and persisted in such measures till they were all united under one bishop or universal head, whom they styled their father, or pope. But their self-created union proved a source of the greatest evils to the church which it ever suffered. And notwithstanding this alarming example before their eyes, some of the most pious, most learned, and most influential ministers and christians, are at this day forming plans to bring about the same unscriptural and unwise union in all the churches in New England. And they are professedly doing it to promote the spread of the gospel, and the prosperity and enlargement of the kingdom of Christ. This makes me say, that christians should not lean to their own understanding in adopting measures to hasten the latter-day glory of the church. Such ecclesiastical combinations are one of the great obstacles in the way of Christ's coming in his glory, and must be removed to prepare the way for him. But christians cannot do too much, by their property, by their orthodoxy, by their contending earnestly for the faith, by their spreading truth, by their opposing error, and by their prayers for the prosperity of the church and the coming of Christ in his millennial glory.

5. This subject calls upon all to rejoice in what God has done and is doing, by the instrumentality of man, to fill the earth with his glory, under the reign of the Prince of Peace. He has been governing the world from the beginning to this day, in favor of Christ and his cause. He has awakened an extraordinary attention to, and zeal for the spread of the gospel, and the removal of the great obstacles which oppose these most desirable objects. If we have cause to be thankful for

our lives, for our health, for our prosperity, for our liberty, for our religious advantages, for the increase of our nation, for the success of the gospel at home and abroad, and for the general peace and harmony among the nations of the earth, the principal reason is, that all these public and private, civil and religious blessings, enable us to employ them in the service of God, and for the promotion of Christ's kingdom. In this view, our obligations of gratitude and praise to God are extremely strong. And unless our gratitude and praise flow from these motives, they will be offensive to God. "I beseech you, therefore, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service."

SERMON XXII.

GOD BLESSES THOSE WHO IMPROVE THEIR PRIVILEGES.

ANNUAL THANKSGIVING, NOVEMBER 23, 1820.

For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance. — Matt. xxv. 29.

These words are immediately connected with the preceding parable of the talents, in which our Saviour represents a man who was about travelling into a far country, as calling his servants to him and giving them the charge of his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one. He that received five talents employed them in his master's service and doubled them; and he that received two talents was equally faithful and successful; but he that received only one talent went and digged in the earth and buried it. After a long time the lord of those servants returned, and called them to an account. The first, giving account of doubling his five talents, was approved and rewarded; and the second, giving account of doubling his two talents, was likewise approved and rewarded; but after the third had confessed his hiding and neglecting his talent, and the motives of his conduct, his lord said, "Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him who hath ten talents. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath." This parable applies to all men, who are the servants of God, who receive all their blessings from him, and who are accountable to him for his favors. The meaning of the parable is very plain

and obvious. By every one that hath, is meant every one that faithfully improves his talents; and by every one that hath not, is meant every one that hides or abuses his talents; and by the general assertion is meant, that God will increase or diminish his favors, accordingly as men improve or abuse them. The truth which now falls under our consideration is,

That if men faithfully improve the blessings which they have received from God, they have reason to expect farther tokens of his favor. I shall,

I. Consider what is implied in men's faithfully improving divine blessings. And,

II. Show that if they do faithfully improve them, they may reasonably expect to receive farther tokens of divine favor.

I. Let us consider what is implied in men's faithfully improving divine blessings.

1. This implies their acknowledging that all their favors come from God. The faithful servants acknowledged that they had received all their talents from the hand of their master. And men, who are the creatures of God, ought to acknowledge that they have received all their blessings from his hand. "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein." Men enjoy no favor but what they have received from their Maker. The apostle James says, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." He is the source of all the good diffused through the universe. But mankind in general are far from realizing and acknowledging the hand which supplies their wants and daily loads them with benefits. They often feel and express a spirit of independence, and act as though they were not indebted to God for any of their common and special enjoyments. Hence the apostle demands of the stupid and self-sufficient, "Who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?" Men will certainly abuse every blessing which they do not consider and acknowledge as a divine favor; and therefore they must acknowledge that all their blessings come from God, in order to improve them faithfully. God employs so many secondary causes in bestowing blessings upon mankind, that they are extremely apt to overlook the primary and supreme Cause from whence they flow. But so long as they disregard the hand of the Giver, they will certainly despise and abuse his gifts. If they would faithfully improve the bounties of Heaven, they must realize and acknowledge God to be the

author of all their mercies. It is because they are his favors, that they are morally bound to improve them faithfully.

2. A proper improvement of divine favors implies a grateful sense of divine goodness. Men may realize that their blessings come from God, and yet have no grateful feelings towards him. The slothful servant acknowledged that his master had given him one talent; but he did not thank him for it. He despised both the favor and the giver. But the faithful servants considered their talents as real favors, which called for their gratitude and fidelity. They felt their obligations to rise in proportion to the number of their favors, which prompted them to use them properly. It is the language of those who receive divine favors gratefully, "What shall we render unto the Lord for all his benefits?" The ungrateful never estimate divine blessings according to their worth; but the truly thankful highly prize them, because they flow from divine benevolence. It is the goodness of God manifested in his favors, which calls for gratitude, and gives them their highest value. So far as men's hearts rise in gratitude to the Father of mercies for the rich profusion of his favors, they will feel a solicitude to improve them wisely and faithfully to the important purposes for which they are put into their hands.

3. A faithful improvement of divine favors implies a cheerful and unreserved consecration of them to Him who gave them. Those who thankfully receive favors from the hand of God feel themselves bound to give them back again to him, and to renounce their absolute right to them. The faithful servants considered their talents not as their own, but as their master's. Though he had given the talents into their hands, he did not relinquish his supreme right to them; and they did not claim them as their own independent property. As soon as he gave them their talents, they in their hearts gave them back again to the real owner. Just so, all who thankfully receive favors from God consider them as his property, and consecrate them to his supreme direction and disposal. As soon as Zaccheus gave himself to the Lord, he consecrated all that he had to him. All the primitive christians felt and acted in the same manner. And this is always the practice of the faithful servants of God. They esteem no blessings or talents fit for use until they are sincerely devoted to God. Accordingly this is always implied in improving them faithfully. Besides,

4. Faithfully improving divine favors farther implies employing them in the service of God. This will naturally flow from receiving them thankfully and consecrating them unreservedly to Him who gave them. The faithful servants, who received their lord's talents, appeared to have no

thought nor desire of employing them for their own private, separate interest. For when their lord returned, they said they had employed them solely for him; and accordingly of their own accord they freely gave up their talents to him with all the fruits and effects of them. They disclaimed all right to the least good that had been produced, both by their talents and their own labor. And their lord acknowledged that their faithfulness consisted in their employing his talents in his service. Divine favors are capable of being improved for God; and they cannot be faithfully employed in any other way than to serve his wise and holy purposes. Men are the servants of God, who has given them no talents to bury or abuse. He requires them to live to him and not to themselves, and to seek first the interests of his kingdom and renounce every interest in opposition to it. It is true, men may do some things for themselves, in subserviency to the glory of God; just as servants may do some things for themselves, in order to promote their master's interest. In order to employ their talents faithfully, men must do such things as God has expressly required, and such as they believe will promote his cause in general, or the good of some of his creatures in particular. And when they do all in their power to promote these benevolent purposes, they employ their talents in the service and to the acceptance of God.

I now proceed to show,

II. That those who faithfully improve the blessings which God bestows upon them, may reasonably expect farther marks of his favor.

This will appear from various considerations.

1. The faithful improvement of divine favors affords the highest enjoyment of them. Christ intimates in the text, that only those properly have, or enjoy the gifts of God, who, like the faithful servants in the parable, rightly improve them. "For to him that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance." He shall be satisfied with the favors God has given him, and really enjoy them, while he improves them faithfully. Men never enjoy any of their talents, while they bury or abuse them; but when they employ their time, their health, their strength, their wealth, their power, or any other divine blessing, to the divine glory, they experience a peculiar satisfaction and happiness. So long as they conscientiously improve their privileges and advantages, they feel contented with those they possess, be they more or less; which is the complete enjoyment of them. The faithful servants of God are ready to adopt the language of David, "My cup runneth over." The primitive christians said, respecting their outward condition, "as

having nothing, and yet possessing all things." And Paul said, "God giveth us all things richly, to enjoy;" and that "he was full and abounded." He that had two talents was as well satisfied as he that had ten. The faithful improvement of divine blessings always serves to increase the enjoyment of those who possess them. So that all men have, in the very frame and constitution of their minds, a solid ground to expect, that if they faithfully improve the blessings which they have received from God, he will give them more, and cause them to yield greater satisfaction and enjoyment.

2. The faithful improvement of divine favors in time past, prepares men for the reception of more and richer blessings in time to come. This is agreeable to the common opinion of mankind. Masters bestow the most favors upon their most faithful servants. Parents grant peculiar marks of their kindness to their most grateful and dutiful children. And princes never fail to distinguish their most faithful subjects, by great and distinguishing marks of their peculiar affection and esteem. Those who have faithfully improved the favors they have received, are proper recipients of greater and more numerous favors. So the master in the parable supposed. He said to each of those who had faithfully improved their talents, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things." The master in the parable represents God, the giver of every blessing to mankind; whose rule in the dispensation of favors is, "Them that honor me, I will honor." Those who have faithfully improved the blessings he has given them, he will distinguish with higher marks of his favor. Their past fidelity prepares them to employ future favors to greater advantage and more to the glory of God. This is agreeable to the declaration of Christ: "He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much." It is justly to be expected, therefore, that God will usually proportion his favors according to their past fidelity in improving the blessings he has already conferred upon them.

3. God has promised to reward past fidelity with future favors. "To him that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance." This is a promise to those who faithfully improve temporal blessings. And we find the same promise made to those who improve richer spiritual privileges and advantages. "Take heed what ye hear: with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you: and unto you that hear shall more be given. For he that hath, to him shall be given." This our Lord said in the fourth of Mark, to encourage men to hear divine truth in love. He tells them the better they hear, the

more benefit they shall receive from the preaching of the gospel; which holds true of the good improvement of all religious advantages. Besides these, there is a great variety of particular promises made to those who improve the good things which God has given them in such acts of kindness and beneficence as he has expressly commanded. "Honor the Lord with thy substance, and with the first fruits of all thine increase: so shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine." "There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth." "The liberal soul shall be made fat; and he that watereth shall be watered also himself." "Give, and it shall be given unto you: good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal, it shall be measured to you again." "He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountfully." God has every where in his word promised to increase the bounties of his providence to those who improve them to the purposes of his glory. And these promises are expressions of the benevolence of his heart towards his dutiful and benevolent subjects. They have reason to expect that he will shower down his blessings upon them, according to their faithful improvement of what they possess. Add to this,

4. God's conduct confirms the declarations of his word. He has, in all ages, bestowed peculiar marks of his favor upon those who faithfully improved the spiritual and temporal blessings, with which he distinguished them. This appears in his conduct towards some eminently faithful individuals. What a train of blessings followed the faithfulness of Abraham, Moses and David! How remarkably did God smile upon Solomon, so long as he wisely improved his superior talents and advantages in promoting religion, and the spiritual and temporal prosperity of his kingdom! And if we now trace the whole history of God's conduct towards his peculiar people, we shall find that he treated them according to the improvement they made of his great and signal favors. Whenever they were grateful and obedient under the reception of his mercies, he increased all their civil and religious advantages, and exalted them above all the nations around them. At a time when they greatly abused his rich and numerous blessings, he challenged them to try his faithfulness in his promises of good to the grateful and obedient. He directed them to devote the bounties of his providence to his service, and try him, whether he would not abundantly multiply them. "Prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that

there shall not be room enough to receive it?" Though God never made the same promises to other nations that he did to the Jews, yet he has in his sovereign and unpromised goodness, from age to age, treated all the kingdoms of the world, in some measure, according to the use they have made of the rich and numerous blessings he has poured down upon them. In a word, both the conduct and promises of God concur to make it evident that mankind have reason to expect, that if they faithfully improve the blessings they have received at his hand, he will continue and increase his favors in number, magnitude, and value.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. If God will increase his favors to those who faithfully improve them, then all may determine whether the blessings they possess have been sent in mercy. God sometimes sends both public and private favors in judgment, as well as in mercy; and it is very important that all should inquire, whether the blessing which God has bestowed upon them, have been bestowed in mercy. And this subject affords one rule, by which to determine this serious and interesting question. Those favors which are bestowed for the faithful improvement of past favors, are certainly sent in mercy. Now, have you reason to view your present favors in this light? Have you had such a proper sense of your dependence upon God for every favor; such gratitude to God for the good things you have possessed; and so unreservedly devoted them to God, and so sincerely aimed to improve them as he has commanded; that you have reason to think that he has approved and rewarded your fidelity? This is the only evidence you can have that your blessings have been sent in mercy. And this is a good evidence. It is worth while to examine your past conduct and feelings respecting this subject, this day, while you are paying your vows to God, and solemnly professing to thank and praise him for that goodness and mercy, which has followed you, not only during the current year, but during the whole course of your lives. Whoso offereth praise from a grateful heart, glorifies and pleases God; but to the ungrateful and disobedient, God says, "Bring no more vain oblations — your new moons and your appointed feasts, my soul hateth; they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them."

The serious question returns — have you thankfully received and faithfully improved the blessings God has bestowed upon you? Answer this question, and you will answer another, — whether the blessings you have possessed, have been sent in

mercy, or in judgment. If you are conscious that you have thankfully received and faithfully improved the blessings of Heaven, you have a solid reason to rejoice in the goodness of God; and you most certainly have a heart to praise him for the large share you have had in the blessings which have filled the world. It is the language of your grateful hearts, "What shall we render to the Lord for all his benefits?" Ask your hearts, and they will tell you, whether your blessings have been sent in mercy, or not.

2. If God will approve and reward only those who improve his favors in his service, then men are extremely unwise as well as criminal, in converting them merely to their own use. They are very apt to improve all their powers and privileges to promote their own private, selfish purposes, in neglect of, and in opposition to, the glory of God and the interests of his kingdom. The talents, the learning, the wealth, and the power, of the great mass of mankind have been employed for ages in opposition to the kingdom of God, and for the promotion of the kingdom of darkness. This is the grossest folly in public bodies and private individuals. They are defeating their own selfish purposes, and destroying, instead of promoting, their own interests. To bury or abuse talents, to pervert public or private privileges, is to diminish them, and turn them into a curse. Those were the wise servants who employed their talents in their master's service; for they eventually promoted their own interest as well as his. And the slothful servant was as unwise as criminal; for he lost his talent and turned it into a curse. It would have been far better for him if he had never received it. The same dire consequences will always follow the perpetual abuse of divine favors.

3. If the only way to obtain the favor and approbation of God is to improve his blessings to his glory, then men ought to be more concerned to improve his favors faithfully, than to gain the possession of them. They are almost universally fond of, and even zealous to gain, a large if not the largest portion of divine blessings. They desire not only one, but two, and even ten talents. The more and greater favors God bestows upon them, the more and greater favors they desire and seek after. They never know when God has given enough. But this is a very egregious mistake. Men ought to be far more concerned to improve divine blessings wisely and faithfully, than to obtain larger and larger portions of them. A man's life does not consist in the abundance he possesses. Abundance often serves to diminish, rather than to increase happiness. Wealth has destroyed a vast many more of mankind than poverty, both for time and eternity. Civil and religious

advantages create great obligations and high responsibility. Those on whom God bestows the greatest external favors have reason to tremble for fear that they shall abuse and pervert them to their own and others' ruin. Hence Agur prayed, "Give me neither poverty nor riches." He was justly more concerned about improving than possessing the good things of life. So every good man feels; and so all men ought to feel.

4. If those who faithfully improve the blessings which God bestows upon them have reason to expect that he will increase them, then those who abuse his favors have reason to expect that he will either diminish them or take them entirely away. Thus the master in the parable treated his unfaithful servant. He took away the talent that he had neglected and abused, and gave it to him who had ten talents, and faithfully improved them. And thus God often treats mankind in the common course of providence. He takes away the gospel, with all its precious ordinances, from one nation, and gives it to another, as a punishment for the abuse of his richest blessings. He takes away the rights and immunities of a nation which abuses its civil privileges, and gives them to another. He punishes those who ungratefully receive and ungratefully abuse his favors, and gives them to others. The abusers of divine goodness, therefore, have reason to expect that God will treat them as he has often treated others, who have despised and perverted his favors. It is very easy for God to punish the ungrateful and disobedient, by stripping them of all their abused enjoyments. It was easy for God to strip Nebuchadnezzar of his intellectual talents, of his royal dignity, and all the wealth and affluence of his kingdom, for abusing such signal favors. It was easy for God to blast, in a moment, the hopes and happiness of Belshazzar, amidst his voluptuous entertainments, for his ingratitude and blasphemy. It was easy for God to strip Haman of his ill-gotten and abused power and affluence, and bury him in the pit he had digged for others. And it is still easy for God to take away any favors he has bestowed, from those who abuse them. And they have reason to fear that he will employ this method, to punish them for abusing the blessings they have enjoyed, by causing them to eat the bitter fruits of their own ways, and filling them with their own devices. Hence,

5. We, as a people, have reason to fear that God will manifest his displeasure towards us, for abusing the great and distinguishing blessings which he has so long and so bountifully bestowed upon us. He hath not dealt so with any nation. No nation now on earth enjoys so great and so numerous public and private, civil and religious privileges and advantages, as

we always have enjoyed, and do still enjoy. God has given us his word and ordinances, and raised up able and faithful men to take us by the hand and show us the way to salvation. He has given us his holy Sabbath, and allowed us to worship him in public as well as in private, according to the dictates of our own consciences. But how have we neglected and abused these precious religious privileges! Have we constantly and seriously read or heard his word? Have we strictly and conscientiously observed his holy day? Have we not egregiously neglected the assembling of ourselves together in his house? Have we not run into all manner of errors, heresies, and delusions, and set up altar against altar, and multiplied religious divisions and animosities? What people have more grossly abused the gospel and all its sacred institutions? Have we not, then, reason to fear that God will, in his holy displeasure, curtail or remove the precious religious privileges which we have so long and so ungratefully despised, neglected, and abused? God has given us the most ample enjoyment of the civil rights, privileges, and immunities which he has taken away from almost all the nations of the earth. While they have been, and still are, groaning under cruel tyranny and oppression, we have been boasting and exulting in the most free and lenient government. But how have we improved these distinguishing blessings of civil liberty and freedom? Have we not perverted and abused them, by running into licentiousness and anarchy? What zeal and exertions have been seen, to subvert the first principles of our excellent constitution! And how have the wisest and best rulers been thrown out of their seats, to make room for the unwise and unprincipled!

Wealth and affluence have been flowing in upon us, like waves of the sea. But what use have we made of these external bounties of Providence? Have we consecrated them to God, and employed them in his service? A few, and but a few, have made these grateful returns to the author of all our mercies. Those who have received the largest portion of temporal favors have generally perverted them to luxury, and prodigality, and intemperance. These are the abounding iniquities of the times. Will not God visit us for such ingratitude for his favors, and such perversion of them? We have certainly much to fear from his just displeasure. Will he increase our national blessings? Will he not diminish, or take them away?

This subject now calls upon all the faithful servants of God, who have improved his blessings in his service, to rejoice, and to praise him for his goodness and wonderful works to the children of men. You are the only persons who have ground

to rejoice in all the blessings of Heaven. Those you have received have done you good, and afford you reason to expect that greater and more numerous blessings are laid up for you in time to come. You are a royal priesthood, to bless and praise God for all the blessings he has bestowed upon you, and upon an ungrateful world. A day of thanksgiving is appropriately your day; and be entreated faithfully and joyfully to perform the duties of it. It may to some be the last they will ever enjoy in this world. But when your annual thanksgivings shall cease, your eternal thanksgiving will commence.

And now let us all consider, that the great Procurer and Dispenser of favors will soon return, and call us to account for all the blessings he has bestowed upon us. He knows whether he has given us one talent, or two, or ten talents. He keeps account of all, however forgetful we may be of the goods he has committed to us. Let us then prepare to meet him at his coming, by being faithful, if we have been unfaithful; or by being more faithful, the longer his favors continue, and the more they are multiplied. And then we may expect to hear that blessed invitation, "Well done, good and faithful servants, enter ye into the joy of your Lord."

SERMON XXIII.

NEW ENGLAND'S SECOND CENTURY.

DECEMBER 31, 1820, THE LAST LORD'S DAY IN THE SECOND CENTURY SINCE OUR FOREFATHERS FIRST SETTLED IN PLYMOUTH.

And what one nation in the earth is like thy people, even like Israel, whom God went to redeem for a people to himself, and to make him a name, and to do for you great things, and terrible, for thy land, before thy people, which thou redeemedst to thee from Egypt, from the nations and their gods?—2 Samuel, vii. 23.

It is the character of good men to be wise and attentive observers of divine Providence. They eye the hand and heart of God in public as well as in private favors. David, having just been reflecting on the signal blessings which God had bestowed upon himself, and which he had promised to bestow upon his posterity, was naturally led to contemplate and admire the more important and distinguishing blessings which he had from the beginning bestowed upon his nation and kingdom. He was deeply impressed with a grateful sense of God's extraordinary and discriminating goodness to them, in their origin, destination, and their present national prosperity. He devoutly appeals to God whether he had not done greater and better things for his people Israel than for any other nation in the world. "What one nation in the earth is like thy people, even like Israel, whom God went to redeem for a people to himself, and to make him a name, and to do for you great things, and terrible, for thy land, before thy people, which thou redeemedst to thee from Egypt, from the nations and their gods?" This concise and comprehensive representation of God's discrimi-

nating goodness to Israel is fully confirmed by the inspired writers, who have given a particular history of the divine conduct towards that highly favored people. They assure us that God raised them up from the pure stock of Abraham, delivered them from their cruel bondage in Egypt, led them safely through the dangers of the wilderness, drove out the idolatrous nations to make room for them in the land of promise, where he raised them to an extraordinary height of national prosperity. And here it is not too much to say that God has treated us with similar marks of his discriminating goodness, through every period of our national existence. To make this appear, and to deduce the proper inferences from it, is the leading object of the present discourse.

I shall pass over the favors which are common to us and to mankind in general, and take notice of those only by which we have been highly distinguished among the nations of the earth.

1. Here it occurs, in the first place, that God raised us up from pious and excellent ancestors. Almost every other nation has risen from a base and degenerate origin. The ancient Romans sprang from a mean and spurious brood of plunderers. The present European nations were generally if not universally founded in ignorance, superstition, and idolatry. But our nation, like the peculiar people of God, was planted a choice vine. Our forefathers, instead of being the off-scouring of all things, were men of whom the world was not worthy. They were the glory and ornament of the land from whence they came. Those who first came here with desires and hopes of making great fortunes, were completely disappointed and defeated in their designs. But when others, who were moved by the higher motives of religion, attempted to plant a nation of christians in this land of pagan darkness and idolatry, the hand of Providence guided all their movements, and crowned their noble enterprise with desired success. The fathers of our nation possessed every thing great and excellent in the eyes of the world, except riches and honors, which they freely sacrificed for the attainment of more noble and important objects. They were men of courage and magnanimity; otherwise they would not have engaged in such a great and hazardous undertaking. They were men of virtue and piety; otherwise they would not have given up all their worldly possessions and enjoyments for the sake of religion. They were also men of superior knowledge, wisdom, and sagacity, and well established in some of the best principles both of religion and government; otherwise they could not have devised and adopted so many wise and useful institutions in their infant state. These principles many

of them had acquired by deep erudition, as well as by long observation and experience. They had felt the weight of both civil and religious oppression. They had been denied the common rights of humanity and religion. This led them to examine these subjects with attention and accuracy. The result was a clear conviction of the truth and importance of the pure principles which they brought with them here, and upon which they uniformly acted in all their public and private concerns, whether of a civil or religious nature. These principles appeared to them in such an important light, that they made the best provision in their power to transmit them pure and uncorrupt to their remotest posterity. Such a choice vine, planted in a new and rich soil, could not fail of producing excellent fruit. It has been the peculiar privilege and glory of our nation, as it was of the people of Israel, that when our progenitors went after God in the wilderness in a land not sown, they were holiness unto the Lord, and the first fruits of their increase. We are now sharing largely in the happy effects of their wisdom, virtue, piety, and paternal affection. What one nation now on earth can trace their origin to such a pure and excellent source?

2. It is a great and distinguishing favor, that God has given us so much liberty, and so many opportunities of forming our own civil and religious institutions. Civil and religious institutions, in all countries except Judea, have generally been owing to chance or violence. The notion of an original compact between rulers and subjects, upon which some theories of government have been built, appears to be altogether visionary and unfounded. The truth is, nations have commonly come together by chance, and united by chance, without any explicit compact between the governors and the governed. And where any people have not formed their civil and religious institutions in this way, they have received their laws and religion from their conquerors. This has been the case with respect to the ancient nations of Europe, Asia and Africa. Their civil and religious institutions have been formed, overturned and new-formed, by those who from time to time gained an absolute and arbitrary dominion over them. Rome heathen, and Rome christian, have had a hand in almost every civil and religious establishment in three quarters of the globe. Rome heathen, before the rise of the Pope, was often very indulgent to the laws and religions of their conquered countries. But after Rome became christian, her bishops rapidly gained both civil and ecclesiastical power, until the Pope usurped an absolute civil and ecclesiastical supremacy over a greater part of the churches and governments of the christian world, who have not thorough-

ly purged themselves from all his false doctrines, absurd ceremonies and tyrannical influence, to this day. It is a great and distinguishing favor, that God has given us from the beginning full liberty and fair opportunities of forming our own civil and religious institutions. When our forefathers fled from the reach and influence of their cruel persecutors, they found themselves at perfect liberty to choose their own forms of religion and government. Accordingly, they assumed their own rights and exercised their own choice. They had none to fear or to please but themselves, in their civil and religious concerns. Every one had his voice, though not perhaps his choice, in all public transactions. They employed the liberty and opportunity they enjoyed, in devising and adopting just such a government as they considered the best; and agreed in just such religious principles and modes of worship as they supposed to be most agreeable to the word of God. They enacted their own laws, and elected their own rulers. They established their own terms of admission into the church, and their own order of ecclesiastical discipline. They chose their own religious teachers, and fixed the modes and ceremonies in the administration of christian ordinances. All these things they did, as soon as they resolved upon a permanent settlement in this country. In about a century and a half after that period, we had another opportunity of revising, altering, and new-modeling our civil constitutions. In that state of national maturity, we employed all our learning, wisdom and experience in framing a civil constitution, which we deemed the best we could form for such a people as ourselves. And in matters of religion, we left every one where he ought to be left, in the exercise of his own reason and conscience, without the least restraint or compulsion. Religion and government must be allowed to be the greatest of all national concerns; and to enjoy complete liberty in respect to these important objects, is to enjoy the greatest civil and religious freedom that any nation can possibly possess. And, in this respect, what nation is there now on earth, whom God has so highly favored and distinguished as these American States?

3. God has remarkably smiled upon us in respect to our growth, protection and outward prosperity. The increase of our numbers has been rapid beyond example. "Health has usually existed here in a degree not often equalled, and perhaps never exceeded. In some towns it appears by long continued registers of births and deaths, that one out of four and one out of five, extensively one out of six, and generally one out of seven of those who are born, live to seventy years of age; and half of those who are born live to twenty years."

This longevity, to whatever causes it may be ascribed, whether the salubrity of our climate, the industry of our people, or their frugal and temperate modes of living, has greatly contributed to increase our population. "In the year 1700, there were one hundred and fifteen incorporated towns in New-England, and probably about eighty thousand inhabitants. There are now about eight hundred and sixty towns, and probably one million two hundred thousand people." Such a vast increase of population in the last hundred years, notwithstanding the multitudes that have been slain and perished in the cruel and bloody wars which have followed one another in the course of forty or fifty years past, is a signal display of divine goodness towards us. But the increase of our numbers is but a small thing in comparison with the many signal instances of divine mercy towards us in times of darkness and deep distress. We have always, till very lately, been imminently exposed to national dangers. But God has carried us as on eagles' wings, through every period of our national existence. When our forefathers first reached these inhospitable shores, they were exposed to the severest sufferings from an inclement season, a savage enemy, a threatening famine, and a raging pestilence. But amidst all these dangers, He in whom they trusted provided a place of habitation, awakened the pity or alarmed the fears of the savages, and prevented their utter extinction. The remnant that survived gradually multiplied, and soon began to penetrate farther and farther into the country, to settle towns, to plant churches, and to form several separate and large colonies, nothwithstanding the wilderness was full of subtle enemies, who were continually plotting to molest and destroy them. Yet God caused their enemies gradually to retire or flee before them, or else gave them power to restrain or subdue them. Divine Providence wonderfully preserved and supported them amidst these fiery trials and ardent struggles for about one hundred and fifty years. These wars with the natives of the country had hardly ceased before France exerted her power and long practiced policy to bring us under her control and dominion, by erecting a chain of forts on our northern and western frontiers, which brought on a bloody and expensive war. But God graciously supported and succeeded us in that dangerous conflict. We then fondly anticipated long peace and security. But in a few years we were awakened from our pleasing dreams by our parent country, who employed all her skill, power and wealth to subject us to a state of abject subordination and bondage. The combat was very long, cruel, and in all respects distressing, but happily terminated in our complete freedom and independence. I pass

over without a single remark the origin and issue of our last contest with that nation. Such have been the special interpositions of Providence in our favor, in the times of our greatest dangers and calamities. What nation is there in the earth who have been so wonderfully protected and preserved as we have been through the long period of two hundred years? We as well as Israel may say, Had not the Lord been on our side when men rose up against us, we had been swallowed up, and the waters had overwhelmed us. These extraordinary preservations have been attended and followed by a national prosperity no less extraordinary. For nearly forty years wealth has been poured in upon us like the waves of the sea; which has disposed and enabled us to make great and rapid improvements "in literature, civilization and every thing which can ameliorate the state of man. At the commencement of the last century there was but one college completely founded in New England. Now there are six. In all the colonies, now states, south of Connecticut, there was then but one college, and now there are fifteen or sixteen." If we look over the world, where shall we find a spot on the face of the earth where the inhabitants have been so rapidly increased, so signally preserved, and so highly prospered, as the people of America? We ought still farther to reflect,

4. That God has graciously distinguished us by spiritual, as well as temporal prosperity. The first ministers whom God disposed to visit and settle in this country, were generally men of great learning, great talents, and eminent piety. They were equal, in all these respects, to the best of their brethren, whom they left behind in the ministry. They were profound theologians. They understood the distinguishing doctrines of the gospel, and taught them with great plainness and pungency. They formed and regulated churches according to the apostolic pattern. Many were turned from darkness to light by their faithful instructions and labors. The greater part of the people in general, for a considerable time, were professors of religion, and apparently pious. They lived like pilgrims and strangers on the earth, and declared by their conduct, that they sought a country better than that they had left, or that they had found. As their descendants spread over a wider and wider extent of country, they lost some of their religious advantages, and gradually declined in the correctness of their sentiments and strictness of their practice. But they continued to maintain the character of a virtuous and pious people during the first century to the beginning of the second, when revivals of religion became more frequent. In 1733 there was an unusual seriousness and attention to religion in several places in New

England. After this, in 1741, there was a much more general and powerful effusion of the divine spirit through the country, which produced the happiest effects. Among these, one was, that it led some of the divines in New England more thoroughly to investigate, more clearly to understand, and more plainly to teach, the pure and distinguishing doctrines of the gospel. Besides that great revival, there have been, almost every year since, particular revivals in particular churches and congregations, which have kept religion generally in a flourishing state. This religious prosperity is more worthy of a grateful notice, because it has been granted while religious errors and declensions were visibly appearing among both ministers and people. Within this thirty years, errorists have abounded. Some have denied the inspiration of the scriptures. Some have denied that system of religious sentiments which was believed and taught by our forefathers. And some have broached doctrines too novel, too unscriptural and visionary, to be mentioned. But God has gloriously triumphed over the united zeal and exertions of bold and presumptuous corrupters. Some have been brought to renounce their errors, comply with the terms of the gospel, and enlist under the banner of Christ; while others have been constrained to retreat in silence, before the united exertions of the friends of truth to detect and refute their absurd and dangerous sentiments. This has been God's usual conduct towards us. Whenever the enemy has appeared to be coming in upon us, he has raised up a standard against him. He has blessed our churches and religious societies with pastors and teachers after his own heart, who have fed them with knowledge and understanding; and who have been the happy instruments of forming a peculiar people for his name, amidst the nations and the gods of America.

I shall conclude this interesting subject with some pertinent and useful remarks.

The first remark that occurs is, that God has done more for us, on the whole, to make us a holy and happy people, than he has done for any other people in the world. Every people enjoy some peculiar privileges or advantages. Some enjoy a more temperate climate, a more salubrious air, a more rich and fertile soil. Some are adorned with richer apparel, and taste more delicious fruits. Some are able to exhibit larger cities, more beautiful gardens, more superb palaces, more elegant sculptures and paintings, and some to live in greater ease, affluence and splendor. But what are all these things, in point of real worth and importance, compared with the distinguishing blessings we enjoy? Knowledge, liberty and religion, are

worth more than all the mines, and pearls, and plants, and fruits, to be found in the bowels, or in the surface of the earth, if we regard only the present life. And if we regard the life to come, our civil and religious privileges are infinitely more valuable than those of the oldest, the richest and greatest nation on the globe. Who, that has any proper sense of the worth of the soul, and the blessings of a happy immortality, would wish that any child of his should be educated, live and die in Britain, in France, in Spain, in Germany, in Persia, in China, or Peru? Is there a more favorable spot on the earth than America, in respect to temporal and spiritual privileges? Should we have our choice, could we find a place better adapted to make us holy and happy in this life and in that which is to come? The inhabitants of New England enjoy complete civil and religious freedom, the best means of gaining every species of useful knowledge, the best opportunities of receiving religious instruction, and the best advantages of living a useful and happy life. And what more can we desire that God should do for us, as rational, immortal and accountable creatures?

In the next place, we ought to reflect, that since God has done so much for us, we have much to do for him. He does not raise up a people, and grant them peculiar favors, for nothing. He has some important purposes for them to promote. When he raised up the children of Israel, and redeemed them from Egypt, and the nations, and their gods, he intended to form a people for himself, who should be the instruments of promoting his honor and interest in the world. As he did more for them than any other people, so they had more to do for him than any other people. They had to keep his sacred oracles, to preserve the true religion, and to diffuse the knowledge of his being and perfections through the earth. They had to prepare the way for the coming of the Messiah, and to spread the gospel of Christ among those who had never enjoyed their great and distinguishing privileges. These great and important purposes they fully answered, before they were disinherited and scattered over the face of the earth. And no doubt God has given us this goodly heritage, and granted us so many rich and peculiar privileges, to answer some important designs of his providence. Though he intends that all other nations shall glorify him, yet they may glorify him in one way, and we in another. They may glorify him, by pulling down the kingdom of Satan, and we, by building up the kingdom of Christ. They may be objects upon which to display his justice, and we, the objects upon which to display his mercy. They may be the occasion, and we the cause, of enlarging, purifying and adorning the christian church. Both the word and the provi-

dence of God lead us to expect, that the errors and delusions of Pagans, Papists, Jews and Mahommedans, are soon to be destroyed. But these errors and delusions are so riveted in the minds, and so connected with the manners and politics of the nations where they prevail, that they will sooner give up their lives, than their false religions. Of course, the destruction of their errors must prove the destruction of themselves. It must be supposed, therefore, that in less than two hundred years, great revolutions and desolations will spread over the anti-christian nations and their gods. But, as we know that the gates of hell shall not ultimately prevail against the church, so we may confidently expect that it will actually flourish in one part of the world, if it be obstructed or extinguished in another. The falling of other kingdoms will be the rising of the kingdom of Christ. And, since the true religion has, for a long time, been spreading from the east to the west, there is reason to believe that God has much for us to do for him, in carrying into execution the purposes of his grace in building up Zion in this large quarter of the globe.

It must be remarked, in the third place, and the remark ought to make a deep impression on every mind, that our great and peculiar privileges, of a civil and religious nature, have greatly aggravated the guilt of our national declensions in virtue and piety. God told his ancient people that they were bent to backsliding, notwithstanding he had bound them to obedience by the strongest and most endearing motives; which extremely aggravated their national guilt. He highly resented and sharply reproved their numerous and aggravated transgressions. "Hear, O heavens; and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken; I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider. Ah, sinful nation; a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil-doers, children that are corrupters; they have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel to anger, they are gone away backward." As we have been distinguished with divine favors like Israel, so our sins are aggravated like theirs. We have sinned not only against the Giver of all our mercies, but against the examples, the labors, the sufferings of our forefathers, and the benevolent exertions and costly sacrifices of thousands of our cotemporaries. All our possessions, privileges and advantages, have been dearly purchased. They are the fruits of the privations, perils, blood, and treasure of many generations. These circumstances are peculiar aggravations of our disobedient and rebellious conduct towards our God, and the God of our fathers.

In particular, our ingratitude for the bounties of Providence, is a sin of the deepest dye. The heathen are accused of ingratitude: but what is the criminality of their ingratitude in comparison with ours. They know not from whence their blessings come; but we know that every good gift and every perfect gift comes from the Father of mercies. They know not, as we do, the worth of the blessings they enjoy. They are ignorant, but we are not, of the solemn account to be given of the use that is made of the favors which God bestows upon his sinful and ill-deserving creatures. We are ungrateful to a known Creator and Benefactor; which extremely aggravates our baseness and guilt.

The disbelief of the existence of God, and the divine inspiration of the scriptures, is far more criminal in this enlightened land, than in any other part of the world. Atheists and deists have long existed, and propagated their absurd and destructive opinions, in various christian countries; but such infidels are of recent rise in New England. They have not presumed to avow their corrupt and demoralizing sentiments till very lately, because they knew, that the great majority of the people here had been early taught to believe the being and perfections of the Deity, and the truth and divinity of his Holy Word. And had it not been for the astonishing spread of infidelity in Europe, infidels would still have been very scarce among us. But now they are numerous, and their profane and vain babblings diffuse the poison of error and ungodliness far and wide, which eats as a canker the hearts of the learned and unlearned. Our infidelity bears the black mark, and contains the aggravated guilt, of apostacy.

The gross heresies which have crept into our churches and religious societies, are extremely criminal and offensive to God, who has favored us with better means and opportunities for religious instruction, than he has granted to any other people. Our fathers maintained able and faithful ministers to teach and inculcate the peculiar doctrines of grace. They constantly attended the public worship of God in his house, and daily read his word in their families. They brought up their children and households in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and obliged them to remember the sabbath day and keep it holy. Neither the young nor the old had any opportunity or peculiar temptation to imbibe gross and dangerous errors. These virtuous and religious habits were transmitted from generation to generation, for nearly a hundred and fifty years. Nor are they entirely erased from the minds of many to the present day. But amidst all the light and love which God has manifested to us, many of the peculiar and important doctrines

of the gospel have been misunderstood, perverted and totally denied. And both the perverters and perverted have contracted aggravated guilt, and have a solemn account to give for departing from the faith once delivered to the saints, and firmly believed and plainly taught by their pious forefathers.

The neglect and contempt of divine ordinances are more criminal in us than in any other people. God has always given us full liberty to worship him in public and private, agreeably to the dictates of our own consciences. He has every sabbath, and at other times, opened the door of his house to us, and invited and commanded us to enter in; but how many refuse or neglect to tread his courts! "The ways of Zion mourn, because few come to her solemn feasts!" How many in our larger and smaller towns, deny the sanctity and pervert the design of the holy sabbath; and instead of attending the worship of God, and the ordinances of the gospel on that day, spend it in idleness, or some other way more agreeable to their corrupt hearts! These are sins directly pointed against God; and are sad marks of our deep declension and aggravated guilt.

Prodigality has arisen to an exorbitant height among this young and half-grown people. Europeans have remarked our egregious folly and guilt, in running into this most impoverishing and demoralizing vice, which has ruined so many great and opulent nations. We have nearly exhausted our pecuniary resources, by purchasing foreign fineries and luxuries; which have led us to renounce our industry for indolence, and our republican virtues for every species of vice and impiety. These deplorable effects of our prodigality mark our base degeneracy in the view of the world, and our aggravated guilt in the sight of God.

But this subject, on this day, leads us to remark, in the last place, that we owe an immense debt of gratitude to God, for raising us up from a very small beginning, and forming us into a large, mighty, and flourishing nation. The close of this day is the close of this year, and the close of this year is the close of the second century since our forefathers first planted a christian church in this uncivilized and unchristianized country. Mr. Prince of Boston, Mr. Dexter of Dedham, and Dr. Holmes of Cambridge, tell us that our pious ancestors kept their first sabbath in Plymouth, on the thirty-first day of December, 1720. Why the twenty-second, rather than the thirty-first day of the month has been so long celebrated as the era of our national existence, I do not learn from our best chronologists. But this, however, seems to be the most proper day to commemorate the birth of our nation, and recognize the wonders of

divine goodness towards us, from our infant to our present state. We are infinitely indebted to God for the great things, and terrible, which he has done for us, to make us a pious, virtuous, and happy people. Our gratitude and obedience ought to correspond to the number, variety, and vast value, of the blessings which he has lavished upon us. This indispensable duty Christ beautifully illustrated in the parable of the talents. Those who received them, were expressly required to occupy and improve them in the service of their benefactor; and he that neglected to feel and fulfil his obligations of gratitude and obedience, was severely reproved and condemned. God solemnly reminded his people whom he had most highly favored, what dutiful and grateful returns he had expected from them. Speaking to them by the Prophet under the similitude of a vineyard, he demands, "What could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it? Wherefore when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes." God justly expected that his people should have been peculiarly grateful and obedient, because he had been peculiarly kind and beneficent. And he may justly expect more love and obedience from us, than from any people on whom he has not bestowed such singular privileges, advantages, and opportunities of promoting his glory and our own temporal and eternal interests. He may justly expect that his churches here should be more pure and uncorrupt than other churches; that his ministers here should be more pious, more orthodox, more laborious, and more faithful, than other ministers; that his rulers here should be more wise, more just, and more devoted to the public good, than other rulers; that his people here should be more religious, more industrious, more obedient, more temperate, and more peaceable, than any other christian people. In a word, he may justly expect that the great and numerous blessings by which he has distinguished us, should inspire us with an ardent zeal to promote the important purposes for which he has raised us up a people to himself. God is opening to our view such future scenes and objects, as ought to encourage and animate us to employ all the means in our power to build up the nation in every thing that is great and good. If God should continue to favor us in time to come, as he has done in time past, the next century may raise us to an elevated rank among the greatest nations on earth. It is supposed that we have usually doubled our numbers once in every twenty-five years; and should we continue to increase in this ratio through the next century, it has been calculated that at the close of it, we shall amount to ninety-six millions of people. God has brought us into a broad place,

where he can not only raise up and support such a great and mighty nation, but employ them all as instruments of promoting his glory and the happiness of this miserable world. And as our progenitors have been the instruments of raising us up to our present high and happy state, so it properly devolves upon us as a grateful and indispensable duty, to employ all our civil, religious, and literary advantages in promoting the civil, religious, and literary interests of this rising empire. A very extensive field of labor lies before us; and though it affords promising prospects, yet these prospects may often be involved in the dark clouds of public calamities and severe trials. This has been the course of divine Providence towards us hitherto, and therefore we may expect that we have not only much to do, but much to suffer, in preserving our liberties both civil and religious, and in extending our borders to the western ocean, through a vast wilderness filled with savages, who are supported in their depredations upon us by those who are inimical to them as well as to us. To civilize those who need to be civilized; to gospelize those who need to be gospelized; to instruct those who need to be instructed; to reform those who need to be reformed; and to restrain those who need to be restrained in this growing and widely extended nation; will require all the wisdom of the wise, all the virtue of the virtuous, and all the courage, zeal, and benevolence, of the pious. You rejoice, and have reason to rejoice, in the present prosperity of the nation; but you have reason to rejoice with trembling, when you reflect that the continuance and increase of their future prosperity depend so much upon the short-sighted wisdom, feeble virtue, and feebler piety, of those who are now on the stage of action. Great zeal and benevolence have been displayed, and are still displayed, in sending the gospel and the preachers of the gospel to the ignorant and uncivilized savages on our borders. But there is a stronger inclination in the selfish and avaricious to destroy, than to protect, enlighten, and save those poor, perishing pagans. And all such persons will do more to counteract and obstruct than to promote our benevolent exertions.

We have the same kind of difficulties and obstacles to meet and surmount, in order to christianize America, that our forefathers had to meet and surmount, when they first fixed their residence among the nations and their gods in this country. They were pious and patriotic; they loved their own country, and determined to promote its spiritual as well as temporal prosperity. And they were wise and good to labor in the field where God had destined them to labor. This country is the proper field for our principal labors and benevolent exertions, to promote the cause of Christ and the salvation of our fellow

men. If religion be essentially necessary to promote and secure the blessings of civil government and civil society, as our wisest statesmen tell us, then it is our imperious duty to diffuse the knowledge and spirit of the gospel as far as possible through the United States, in order to secure and promote our highest temporal as well as spiritual interests. These are interests which God undoubtedly intended to promote, by giving us a national existence; and by the great and peculiar privileges and blessings which he has already conferred upon us. What he has done for us, is a presage of what he still intends to do for us in future. We have good grounds to place an unshaken confidence in his wisdom, power and goodness. The prayers of our pious ancestors and of their pious posterity, have entered into the ears of Him, who is able and ready to answer them. The burden of their fervent petitions has been for the temporal and spiritual prosperity of America. They have availed much, and will avail much, to draw down future blessings upon this favorite land. We have the same encouragement to trust in God that they had, and are bound by the same obligations to do it. But our trust must be accompanied with our best efforts to make this people both holy and happy. All our national interests are now lodged in our hands, and it depends upon us, whether we will maintain or destroy them. If we are faithful to God, to ourselves, and to our posterity, God will never leave nor forsake us, nor suffer us to leave and forsake him.

We have lived to see what none of us will ever live to see again — the close of a century. To-morrow we may see the beginning of a new century; but we have no ground to expect to see the end of it. Before that period arrives, we shall all follow one another into that world from whence we shall never return. In the course of the current year, there have been nineteen deaths among this people. We shall not soon forget those who were near and dear to us. Though one century be just as long as another, not so are the lives of men. The grave is without any order. Let no man boast of to-morrow, for he knoweth not what a day, and much less what a year, or a century, may bring forth. What vast numbers of mankind have the last hundred years carried to their long home; and how many will the next sweep off from the face of the earth; how many more will live and die, before that great day shall come, when the whole human race will find their final and unchangeable condition! We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, where we shall be deeply and eternally interested in the decisions of that Supreme Judge. The celebration of the last century of time will be a joyful festival to some, but a day of darkness and hopeless destruction to others. If any have the witness in themselves that they are prepared to meet their

Judge in peace, let them rejoice; but if any are conscious to themselves that they are not prepared, let them mourn, repent, and return to God upon the gracious terms of the gospel, before their day of grace expires, and their feet stumble upon the dark mountains of death.

SERMON XXIV.

THE BLESSING OF GOD UPON THOSE WHO HONOR HIS INSTITUTIONS.

JANUARY 7, 1821.

And the ark of God remained with the family of Obed-edom, in his house three months. And the Lord blessed the house of Obed-edom, and all that he had. — 1 Chronicles, xiii. 14.

In the days of Eli, the Philistines waged war with Israel, and in one battle slew thirty thousand footmen, and took the ark of God, and set it in the house of Dagon their god. But the next morning they found their false deity fallen upon his face to the earth before the ark of the Lord. Though they immediately sent the ark of God from Ashdod to Ekron, yet it remained in the land of the Philistines seven months. At length, at the direction of their priests, they carried the ark to Beth-shemesh. But God awfully frowned upon the men of Beth-shemesh, who presumed to look into the ark; upon which they sent to the inhabitants of Kirjath-jearim to come and take it from them. Accordingly they came, and carried it to the house of Abinadab, where it remained twenty years. After David had come to the throne, and effectually subdued the Philistines, he determined to fetch the ark from the house of Abinadab to his own city, Jerusalem. But while he was joyfully performing this pious work, Uzzah, one of the priests who accompanied him, put forth his hand to steady the ark, which was displeasing to God, who struck him dead in a moment for his error. This sad catastrophe so affected the heart of David that he said, "How shall I bring the ark of God home to me? So David brought not the ark home to himself to the city of

David, but carried it aside into the house of Obed-edom the Gittite. And the ark of God remained with the family of Obed-edom in his house three months. And the Lord blessed the house of Obed-edom, and all that he had;" or as it is said in another place, "all his household."

The ark was a small elegant chest, which contained the two tables of the law, written by the finger of God in alphabetical letters. This was probably the first alphabetical writing in the world. Though the Egyptians and other heathen nations used to employ hieroglyphics, to record past events, and denote the actions and intellectual and moral qualities of men, yet they were totally ignorant of letters, which compose words and sentences by their particular sounds. For there was no analogy between hieroglyphics and letters. Hieroglyphics were pictures, or signs, and conveyed ideas by their shape, without sounds. Letters convey ideas by their sounds, and not by their shapes. Though some conjecture that letters were a human invention, yet no author has presumed to tell us positively when, or where, or by whom, letters were first discovered; which is a strong presumptive evidence that no man ever did discover them, and consequently that they were at first revealed to Moses, at the giving of the law at Mount Sinai. The law contained in the ark was the Hebrew Bible, written by the finger of God in alphabetical letters; and is now the oldest as well as the best book in the world. Obed-edom knew that the ark contained the written word of God, and esteemed it, as David did, "better unto him than thousands of gold and silver." He gladly received it into his house as the richest treasure, and treated it with the highest veneration and respect; which was highly pleasing to God, who for that reason "blessed him and all that he had;" that is, all his household. From this we may justly conclude,

That God will bless those families who treat his word with proper respect. I shall show,

I. That they ought to treat it with proper respect.

II. That if they do this, they may expect God will bless them.

I. I am to show that families ought to treat the word of God with proper respect.

By the word of God, in this discourse, we are to understand not only the two tables of the law, written by the hand of God, in alphabetical letters, but also all the books of the Old and New Testaments, written at different times, by different men, as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. After God had written and delivered the two tables of the law to Moses, he inspired him to write the books of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus,

Numbers, and Deuteronomy. After Moses had written the five books which have been mentioned, and which are commonly called the Pentateuch, God inspired Samuel, David, and a succession of prophets, to write all the rest of the books of the Old Testament, from Joshua to Malachi. Then divine inspiration ceased for about two hundred and twenty years. At the close of that period God inspired the evangelists and apostles to write all the books of the New Testament, at different times and in different places. These books of the Old and New Testaments compose the Bible, which contains the whole word of God. The Bible is the most venerable and valuable book in the world, and ought to be treated in every family as the ark was treated in the family of Obed-edom, who highly esteemed and respected it. Here then it may be observed,

1. That every family ought to have the word of God in their house. It was sent to the family of Obed-edom providentially, who received and kept it gladly. It was not sent to every family in Israel in the same extraordinary way. No family could have a Bible without writing one out themselves, or applying to some priest to write one out for them. The case is far different here, at this day. Bibles are now multiplied, and may be easily obtained by every family. This is generally if not universally true, with respect to those who live in this land of Bibles. Though thousands are actually destitute of this sacred volume, yet it is owing more to their contempt and disregard of the word of God, than to any other cause. No family who have a proper respect for the word of God will fail to have and keep the Bible in their house. It is the most valuable and important article they can possess, whether they are poor or rich. But I will not dwell upon this particular, since I would charitably hope that but few families in this place, or in these parts, are so unwise and negligent as not to have and keep the word of God in their houses.

2. Parents, or heads of families, should not only have the word of God in their houses, but read it seriously every day in their families. Having the Bible in their houses, while they neglect to read it, is treating it with contempt, instead of respect. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." Parents and children, masters and servants, old and young, rich and poor, all need the daily instructions of the word of God; and, for this reason, it ought to be read every day in every family, for the benefit of all its members. Paul intimates that Timothy had known from a child the scriptures, by such family instruction. God required the heads of

households among his people of old, to teach their children daily and diligently, the precepts and commands which he had given them for their good. The word of God, which is able to make men wise unto salvation, ought to be read statedly every day in every family circle. Whoever is at the head of such a little society, ought to call all the members together, that he may read the scriptures in a serious and social manner; which must be more impressive, than for each individual, though able, to read to himself. There is something in almost every chapter, which will more especially apply to each member of a family, and carry peculiar instruction to each individual, with respect to duty, or danger, or consolation. When the Bible is read in a family, God speaks to one as well as another, and all are deeply interested in what God says to them, which ought to fix their whole attention to what they hear.

3. The Bible ought to be read in a family with a view to understand it. It can be of no service to read and hear the word of God, without understanding it. Though there be some historical, typical and prophetical parts of it, that are hard to be understood; yet the great doctrines and duties contained in it are level to every capacity. It is not difficult to understand what God says of himself, or what he says to saints, or what he says to sinners, or what he says to parents, or what he says to children, or what he says to the rich, to the high, and to the low. The doctrines, the duties, the promises, the threatenings, and the great objects of eternity, are most plainly and solemnly exhibited in the Bible. Way-faring men cannot easily misunderstand it, if they seriously and impartially attend to it. But if they do not seriously and impartially attend to it, with a view and desire to understand it, they will read and hear it in vain, and worse than in vain. Instead of being instructed, they will be condemned, by it. The Bible is not to be read in a formal and irreverent manner in a family, but with the same solemnity and attention which becomes every religious duty; and, if it be read and heard with a view to understand the great and solemn truths contained in it, the reader and hearers will be both solemn and attentive, as hearing God himself speaking to them. They will throw aside all secular business, and banish all wordly thoughts from their minds, and endeavor to learn what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God, which they ought to know and regard. I may add,

4. The Bible is to be read and heard in a family, with a sincere desire and intention to do whatsoever God has commanded. Paul said, "he delighted in the law of God, after the inward man." David resolved that he would "run in the

way of God's commandments, when he should enlarge his heart." And Joshua, in the view of the divine commands, sincerely declared, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." These pious men meant to treat the word of God with all due respect. They viewed all the divine precepts and injunctions as holy, just, and good, and worthy of cordial approbation and obedience. They considered the Bible as the word of God, and as clothed with divine authority, which they were under indispensable obligations to obey with all the heart. It becomes every family to view the Bible not as the word of man, but as the word of God, which is clothed with infinite authority; and to read and hear it read, with cordial approbation, and a sincere intention to obey every intimation of the divine will. God will consider and treat them as despisers of his word, though they read it ever so often, and understand it ever so well, if they do not delight in it, and obey it from the heart.

I now proceed to show,

II. That if they do read and hear the Bible with such proper respect, God will bless them.

He blessed the house of Obed-edom, and all that he had, because he received, preserved, and treated his holy word with a sincere and sacred regard. It seems that this pious parent walked within his house with a perfect and upright heart, and commanded his children and household to walk in the way of the Lord; who blessed them all with piety, peace, and prosperity. This is plainly intimated by what we afterward read of this amiable and useful family. "Moreover the sons of Obed-edom were Shemaiah the first-born, Jehozabad the second, Joah the third, and Sacar the fourth, and Nethaneel the fifth, Ammiel the sixth, Issachar the seventh, Peulthai the eighth; for God blessed him." It was a peculiar favor, that he gave him such a large number of sons, and formed them to virtue, piety, and usefulness, among "the chief men" who ministered in the sanctuary. God has promised to bless those abundantly, who love, esteem, and cordially obey, his word. "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful: but his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season: his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper." God said to every Israelite, by the mouth of Moses, "All these blessings shall come upon thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God. Blessed shalt thou be in the city, and blessed shalt thou be in

the field. Blessed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy ground, and the fruit of thy cattle, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep. Blessed shall be thy basket and thy store. Blessed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and blessed shalt thou be when thou goest out." Such family blessings were promised to pious families, who hearkened to the voice of God in his word. Hence it became a proverb in Israel, "The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked; but he blesseth the habitation of the just." And there are still good reasons why God should bless those families, who keep, and read, and understand, and cordially love and obey, his word.

1. Because such pious families are the preservers of the word of God. Were it not for them, the Bible would be lost among any people. In a time of great declension in Judea, the sacred scriptures were generally lost, and were not found till they repaired the house of the Lord, which had been neglected, and was falling into ruin. "Then Hilkiah the high priest said unto Shaphan the scribe, I have found the book of the law in the house of the Lord." Hilkiah gave the book to Shaphan, and he showed it to Josiah the king, who was deeply affected and alarmed when he read it. He found the contents of it were unspeakably solemn, instructive and important. And they are no less solemn, instructive and important now, than they were three thousand years ago. It was a great and distinguishing favor to Israel, that God committed the Bible to their trust, and to their use. Hence the apostle asks and answers this question: "What advantage hath the Jew? Much every way; chiefly because that unto them were committed the oracles of God." The Bible is not now committed to any particular nation or people, or religious society, but to pious families, who sincerely love, esteem, and obey it. Were it not for such families, the Bible would soon be lost, and become extinct. By faithfully discharging this solemn trust, they become the light of the world, and the great instruments of preventing the greatest loss that mankind could sustain. Though families at this day are generally fond of obtaining, and keeping, and reading books, yet none but pious families are fond of having and reading the Bible. For they do not open this book one time in ten that they open and read other books, which do them no good, but a great deal of hurt. Or if they do read the Bible, it is not with a desire to understand and obey it; but often to support their erroneous sentiments and sinful practices. So that it is not to be expected, that the Bible will long be kept in any but pious families. They are the only faithful preservers of the oracles of God; and, on that account, he delights to bless them. And so he does,

2. Because they lay the greatest check and restraint upon every species of irreligion and impiety. They discountenance all fashionable vices, and will not allow the vicious to practice them in their houses; such as profane swearing, Sabbath-breaking, intemperance, and gaming. These practices cannot be found in any family, who daily read, and love, and obey, the Bible. And were all families of this amiable and pious character, in any place, they would effectually check and restrain all fashionable and destructive vices. Were there no irreligious families, the young, the vain, and the vicious, could find no doors open to receive them on the Sabbath, or at any other time; which would impose upon them a complete restraint. Pious families are the most powerful restraint upon the irreligious and vicious. They do that which the laws cannot do while the vicious find families to countenance, receive and protect them. Where the majority of families are pious, their example and influence are very great; and often bear down the vicious, and oblige them to hide their heads and creep into corners. And this we find is sometimes the case, where God pours out his spirit powerfully and generally. There pious parents and pious youth strike an awe, and lay a powerful restraint upon the stupid and profligate, and carry conviction to the hearts and consciences of the licentious, and cause them to make a solemn pause in their career of vanity and vice. Such a pious and firm resistance of religious families to the workers of iniquity, is highly beneficial to the world, and pleasing to God. He loves them that love him, and them that honor him he will honor.

3. God will bless pious families, because they are the important instruments of promoting and transmitting pure religion from generation to generation. There was a time when true religion was confined to one single family, who were the means of preserving the whole human race, and of transmitting religious instruction to all future ages. And there was a time when there were but very few families in Israel who were the happy and virtuous instruments of preserving and transmitting true religion to that and all other nations to the end of the world. Isaiah declares, "Except the Lord of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah." Had religion then died in Judea, it would have died through the whole world, and never revived again. While the seven famous churches in Asia contained a number of pious families, they were preserved from ruin. But when these became extinct, the door was opened for the prevalence of vice, error, and delusion, which now overspread that once religious and happy part of

the world. It depends upon pious families in every christian nation, country and state, to transmit religion from generation to generation, to the end of time. This has been and still is the important service which pious families have done, are doing, and will do for God, and for the whole world of mankind. They are not only the light of the world, but the salt of the earth. Their characters and conduct are highly pleasing to God, who will not fail to bless them and all that they have, with both temporal and spiritual favors. A regard to his own character, to his own interests, and to the good of this sinful and perishing world, must move him to love and favor pious families, who keep, and love, and obey, and transmit, his word to all the nations of the earth.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. If God will bless those families who treat his word with proper respect, then it is the wisdom as well as duty of every family to pay a cordial and sacred regard to the Bible. Every family ought to seek the favor of God. "The blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich; and he addeth no sorrow with it." It depends upon God whether any family shall enjoy either temporal or spiritual prosperity. And if they desire either the one or both of these, it is their duty and wisdom to desire and seek the presence of God with them, and his blessing upon them. David resolved to do this. He says, "I will sing of mercy and judgment: unto thee, O Lord, will I sing. I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way. O when wilt thou come unto me? I will walk within my house with a perfect heart. I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside." No family can sincerely invite God to dwell with them, who do not pay so much regard to his word as to keep it in their house, and read it statedly from day to day with serious and solemn attention, and a desire and intention to obey it. It is through the medium of his word that God enlightens and sanctifies the members of a family, and prepares them for every needed blessing. They have no reason to think that any outward favors will make them either holy or happy, if they do not govern their hearts and lives according to the precepts of his word. It concerns the rich as well as the poor families, and the young as well as the old families, to keep the Bible in their houses; and to read it, and to understand it, and cordially obey all the divine commands contained in it, if they would secure temporal and eternal happiness. Dives lived in wealth and luxury without the presence and blessing of God; and what was the fatal consequence?

The worldling who pulled down his barns and resolved to build larger, and spend his days in self-enjoyment, was disappointed and destroyed. It is folly and presumption for any family to imagine that they can live happily and safely while they disregard God and his holy word. But are there not some families in this place, who do not read the Bible as a family duty from month to month, and from year to year? And is not this number yearly and rapidly increasing, by the accession of young and rising families? Such families practically say unto God, "Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways." Can they reasonably expect that God will bless them? Have they not ground to fear that God will curse their blessings? The growing disregard to the Bible in regular and respectable families, as well as in families of an opposite description, affords a very dark aspect upon religion; and presages the prevalence of every thing injurious to the peace and happiness of the rising generation here, and almost every where else.

2. If keeping, reading and obeying the word of God, are the duties which draw down the blessings of God on a family, then those families that neglect these duties, have reason to expect the frowns of Heaven upon them. Every family who neglects these duties, is a wicked family. We are expressly told "that the curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked." However amiable, regular, and even exemplary, they may be in point of mere morality; their want of love to God and his word renders them in his eyes a wicked family, and obnoxious to his holy and just displeasure. And since they must know that he is displeased with them, they have reason to fear that he will express his displeasure towards them in some way or other. Though he suffer them to gain wealth and affluence, yet he may imbitter these possessions, by causing them to become the means of feeding an insatiable worldly spirit; which will not allow them to rest satisfied with any present enjoyments, but fill their minds with perpetual anxiety and disappointment. Or he may suddenly and unexpectedly strip them of their worldly prosperity, and sink them in poverty and misery. Or he may cause their neglect of family duties to lead them into the neglect of all other duties, and into the practice of the most destructive vices. In a vast variety of ways God can express his displeasure towards them, and completely ruin them, both in time and eternity. It is enough to make every member of a wicked family tremble, to hear God repeat his curses to every one in Israel who disregarded and disobeyed his voice in his word. "Cursed shalt thou be in the city, and cursed shalt thou be in the field. Cursed shall be thy basket and thy store. Cursed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the

fruit of thy land, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep. Cursed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and cursed shalt thou be when thou goest out. The Lord shall send upon thee cursing, vexation, and rebuke, in all thou settest thine hand unto for to do." It is true, God is not obliged to inflict such curses upon any wicked person, or wicked family, in the present probationary state. He may suffer "the tabernacles of robbers to prosper." But he may inflict the curses he has threatened, upon any wicked person or family. And universal observation proves that he does, in ten thousand instances, manifest his awful displeasure towards those who disregard and disobey his voice in his word. How often do those families, who disregard, disbelieve and despise the Bible, run into all manner of vicious practices, which eventually pierce their souls with many sorrows! They put themselves out of the divine protection, and expose themselves to all the evils and dangers of this present evil world, which may drown them in temporal and eternal perdition.

3. If those families only are religious who pay proper respect to the word of God, then there is ground to conclude that there are many families in this place who are not religious. Are there not many who do not pay proper respect to the Bible? Though there may be but few who do not keep the Bible in their houses, may there not be many, nevertheless, who do not read the Bible every day as a family duty? Is it not true, that in many families the Bible is not read except upon the Sabbath? Is it not true, that in many more families the Bible is not read even on that holy day? Can it be supposed that, in those families in which the Bible is not read, family worship is statedly performed, or any forms of religion daily maintained? And where neither God nor his word is acknowledged, is there any religion? Is there any impropriety, then, in calling all those families irreligious who neglect all religious duties, be there more or fewer of such families? I appeal to any family, whether they have a right to call themselves, or to be called, a religious family, when they neither read the word of God nor address his throne of grace statedly, as a family? It is improper to call any person irreligious, who appears in his conduct to be religious; and it is no less improper to call any family irreligious, who appear in their conduct to be religious. But any persons or families, who do not treat God nor his word with proper religious respect, may properly be called irreligious. If this be a proper and just description of irreligious families, is there not ground to think that they are numerous, and have greatly increased within a few years? If this be true, we may easily account for the present visible declension of religion, for the present visible neglect of family

government, for the present visible neglect of public worship, for the present visible prevalence of profaneness, Sabbath-breaking, card-playing, and of almost every other vice. All these evils naturally flow from irreligious families, and not so much from any irreligious individuals. These are to be found at all times and in all places; but they could do comparatively very little hurt, were it not for irreligious families, who countenance, assist, and protect them. Irreligious families are the nurseries of all manner of vice and moral corruption. They train up those under their care in the way in which they should not go. The heads of irreligious families set examples before their households which have the most corrupting tendency, and seldom fail of producing every species of error, vice, and immorality. Do not profane swearers, Sabbath-breakers, purloiners, idlers, knaves, drunkards, and all sorts of corrupters, generally spring from irreligious families? Can it be expected, then, that vicious individuals should be reformed or restrained, unless irreligious families are reformed or restrained?

4. We learn from this subject, how important it is that heads of families should be truly religious. It is highly important to themselves, in order to obtain the blessing of God upon their persons, and all that they have in the world which they deem dear and valuable. God blessed Obed-edom because he paid peculiar and sacred regard to his holy word. He took the proper method to draw down divine blessings upon himself and all that he had. And every head of a family, if wise for himself, will receive the word of God into his house and into his heart, that God may make him a blessing to himself. But it is of much higher importance that God should make him a blessing to his family, to his friends, and to all among whom he lives, and with whom he is connected. Though it be much to be desired, that those who have long shut God and his word out of their houses should yet become reconciled to God, and to the terms of mercy which he has proposed in his word; yet there is great reason to fear that God has given them up to walk in their own chosen ways, which lead to everlasting death. But there is more ground to hope that the irreligious heads of young families may yet turn to God, and draw down his blessings upon themselves and upon their households. And it is of far more importance that such heads of rising families should become religious, and walk in their houses wisely and with a perfect heart, and train up those precious souls committed to their care, instruction, and government, in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Let them do this, and shut their doors against all corrupters; and religion would revive, and every species of vice creep into corners. The young families in this place fill very solemn and important stations. They

must necessarily form the moral habits and moral characters of this people, and prepare them for the peculiar smiles or frowns of God. It is not so strange, that those young persons who have never enjoyed the peculiar privilege of family religion and family government, should enter their own houses without paying any proper respect to God and his word, and resolve to live like heathen. But it does seem strange, that those who have enjoyed the privilege of family religion and family government, and been statedly and practically taught to read and revere and love the word of God, and to call upon his name; should either desire or dare to shut God and his word out of their houses, and open their doors to the vicious and licentious. And are there not such families to be found? How must this grieve the hearts of their pious parents, if still living, to find their prayers, instructions, restraints, and examples, lost upon them! Can they hope to follow their deceased or their aged parents into the blessed mansions of heaven? They are entreated, if they have a Bible in their house, to sit down and read it; and hear, and understand, and feel, and love, what God has said to them by precept and example. He has commanded parents to bring up their children in the "nurture and admonition of the Lord." And he has recorded for their instruction and admonition the example of Abraham, who commanded his children and household to walk in the way of the Lord; the example of Job and David, who daily blessed their families; and the example of the mother and grandmother of young Timothy, who taught him from a child to read, to understand, to love, and to obey, the holy scriptures. Read the Bible, and see if you can find any excuse for neglecting to read it, and to call upon God, as a family duty; or for being conformed to the spirit, the customs and manners of a world that lies in wickedness. Though you may feel yourselves at liberty to regard or disregard the messengers of God, you have no right to feel yourselves at liberty to disregard the word of God, which is clothed with infinite authority. If you would read the word of God, he would preach to you every Sabbath, whether you are in his house or your own. This subject urges you to hear God preach to you every Sabbath and every day; which is a duty that the world cannot excuse you, and which you cannot excuse yourselves, from performing.

5. We learn from what has been said, the great criminality of irreligious children, who have been religiously educated. They have had religious instruction poured into their minds while their hearts and consciences were tender, and the most easily impressible by divine truth. But though they have had line upon line, and precept upon precept, they have hardened their hearts and seared their consciences, and resisted the coun-

sel of God and man against themselves. Their guilt is in exact proportion to the light they have abused, and the obligations they have violated. They are vastly more criminal than those stupid and ignorant children, who have never heard the Bible read in the family, nor seen any forms of family religion performed. And there may be in this, as well as in many other places, children brought up in this irreligious manner. But there are but few of this description here. The great majority of irreligious children and youth have been better taught; and yet are as loose, unprincipled, and unrestrainable, as if they had never been taught to remember their Creator. If you look over the irreligious families in this place, how many unpromising branches will you see growing out of them, that threaten to corrupt and destroy all within the circle of their influence! How can irreligious parents bear to see the fruit of their negligence in their irreligious and corrupting offspring, when they reflect what a load of guilt they have brought upon them? And how can the irreligious children of pious parents, bear to reflect upon that final and eternal separation that must soon, at longest, take place between them, when they must feel that they have destroyed themselves?

6. It appears from what has been said, that God frowns upon any people, when he removes from among them pious families, or pious heads of families. Such persons and families are a great blessing to all around them, and especially to all their near relatives and connections. Their removal is an alarming providence. It indicates that they are taken away from the evil to come, and from preparing the means of temporal and spiritual calamities. God has, within a few years, been removing pious families, and the pious heads of families. Those houses which were bethels, and resembled the house and family of Obed-edom, are greatly diminished, and are now filled with those that know not, and serve not, the God of their fathers. The last week, two apparently pious heads of families have been removed by death. Though they lived to old age, still their near relatives and friends must feel and lament their loss. And so may others, especially the members of this church, whose numbers are diminishing, and few are coming forward, to stand in the gap, and fill up the hedge.

Finally, this subject calls upon all pious families not to relax, but increase their efforts to preserve the Bible, to restrain vice, and transmit religion to their latest posterity in this place. Treat God and his word properly, in private and in public, and you may deliver your own souls, and do much to prevent others from destroying theirs. Let your eyes affect your hearts. Can you see religion die in your own hands?

SERMON XXV.

THE SIN OF FOLLOWING THE MULTITUDE TO DO EVIL.

ANNUAL FAST, 1821.

THOU shalt not follow a multitude to do evil. — EXODUS, xxiii. 2

GOD requires men to do some things, and forbids them to do others; but his prohibitions are as binding as his precepts, because they are clothed with the same divine authority. The prohibition in the text primarily respects the giving of a false testimony before a civil tribunal, through fear or favor of a multitude who are disposed to do evil, and to lead others to follow their pernicious example. But this prohibition may be properly considered as a general caution to every one, not to follow a multitude to do evil in any of their wicked conduct or sinful courses. My present design is to consider what is implied in this solemn and extensive prohibition. And,

I. It implies that the majority or great mass of mankind are uniformly and constantly engaged in doing evil.

All men by nature are morally depraved; and a great majority of them are in a state of nature, and constantly act under the influence of their native depravity, which disposes them to do nothing but evil. Though God might have renewed and sanctified every person from the first apostacy to the present day, yet he has not seen fit hitherto to do it, but has left the great majority of the human race, from age to age, to walk in the ways of their heart, and in the sight of their eyes, and in a constant course of disobedience to his commands. God considers all men as either holy or unholy, either godly or ungodly, either righteous or unrighteous, either saints or sinners, either his friends or his enemies. His friends have always been a small

minority, in comparison with the large majority of his enemies, and hardly worth mentioning. Accordingly he generally speaks of the world as altogether corrupt and sinful. And he calls sinners the world, the men of the world, the children of the world, the world of the ungodly, and the world that lies in wickedness, in distinction from saints, whom he has chosen out of the world, whom he has set apart for himself, and whom he forbids to be conformed to the world, or to be in friendship with the world. This distinction has existed in fact, for the great majority of mankind have always been wholly disaffected to God, and in a state of actual rebellion against him. In this light he represents them in his word. "The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God. They are corrupt; they have done abominable works; there is none that doeth good. The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are altogether become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no, not one." The apostle gives a plain reason for this universal corruption of mankind when he says, "God in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways." This representation of mankind in general is corroborated by the history which God has given of their state and character, by the pen of inspiration. The Bible informs us that all flesh corrupted their way in the first ages of the world; that from the calling of Abraham, God suffered all nations but one to act out the depravity of their hearts without restraint; that the nation whom he did not give up were generally corrupt until the coming of Christ; and that since that day many have been called and but few have been chosen. Profane history concurs with sacred in representing the Egyptians, Babylonians, Chaldeans, Grecians, Romans, and all other nations, destitute of divine revelation, as sunk down in idolatry, superstition, and every species of moral corruption. And we know that the greater part of those who enjoy the gospel are atheists, or deists, or formalists, or open and avowed enemies to every thing sacred and divine; and that there is only a very few who really fear God and keep his commands. God knew, when he gave the solemn prohibition in the text, that the multitude, or the great majority of mankind, were then, and would be in time to come, uniformly and constantly engaged in doing evil in various ways.

Some, by opposing, instead of promoting, the gracious design of God in forming vessels of mercy, and preparing them for the kingdom of glory. This was the case in the earliest ages, before he chose the seed of Abraham for his peculiar people. Cain, and the posterity of Cain, and all that were born

after the flesh, were disposed to persecute the sons of God, who were born after the spirit. The nations round about Judea, were openly and avowedly hostile to the peculiar people of God, and did all in their power to prevent God's carrying on his gracious design among them. And there have been ever since, many among the men of the world, who have been openly and violently engaged in opposing the cause and the friends of God, by which they have obstructed the cause of truth, and done both temporal and eternal injury to mankind. While Paul and Barnabas were at Paphos, Sergius Paulus desired to hear them preach the gospel; but Elymas the sorcerer withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith. Then Paul, filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him, and said, "O full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?" Such a spirit has often been cherished and expressed, by a multitude of those whose hearts were fully set in them to do evil.

Some among the men of the world do evil, by openly and grossly disobeying, instead of obeying, the express commands of God. They cast the divine laws behind their backs, and practically say, that he who hath made them shall not reign over them. They take the name of God in vain, profane his holy day, and treat his gospel as a cunningly devised fable; and at the same time practice every kind of iniquity with greediness. They set a visible example of unrestrained wickedness.

There are many more among the mass of mankind, who do evil by hating, instead of loving God. They as really hate God, as those who oppose his cause, disbelieve his word, or externally disobey his commands. They as clearly discover their unsanctified hearts, by their sins of omission, as others do by their sins of commission; and actually unite in their views, and feelings, and conduct, with the great majority of the ungodly world, in doing evil. All these classes of men which have been mentioned, are in the state of nature, and constantly acting under the influence of their native depravity; by which they are setting ten thousand evil and pernicious examples. This is the vast multitude of evil-doers, whom God in the text forbids every person to follow.

II. The prohibition which we are considering implies that every person is naturally disposed to follow a multitude to do evil.

We may presume that God would never forbid men to do what they have no natural disposition to do. He would not, therefore, have given the prohibition in the text, if he had not known that all men are naturally disposed to follow a multi-

tude to do evil. They are, by nature, more disposed to do evil, than to do good; yea, they are wholly disposed to do evil, and wholly averse from doing good. There is none, by nature, disposed to do good; no, not one. They are all naturally children of disobedience, and have a carnal mind, which is enmity against God, not subject to his law, neither indeed can be. And as every one is naturally disposed to do evil himself, so he is naturally disposed to follow others who do evil. This is true of children, of youth, and of men, through every period of life. They are all naturally disposed both to lead and to be led, to do evil. Though some deny that men are born with a natural disposition to do evil any more than to do good; yet they allow that children very early become sinners, merely by the force and influence of the bad examples of the multitude of those who do evil. This proves, beyond contradiction, that men are universally, if not naturally, disposed to follow bad examples.

But there is no room for conjecture on this subject. The Bible puts it beyond doubt, that men are naturally, as well as universally, disposed to do evil, and consequently disposed to follow the examples of evil-doers. Men are born like the wild ass's colt, entirely stupid in respect to invisible and divine realities, which leads them to disbelieve, disregard, and disobey God. Men are born with a supreme love to themselves, which naturally leads them to pursue their own pleasure and interests, notwithstanding the restraints of reason and conscience. And must not every person of this character and disposition love to follow the example of those who justify his evil conduct and sinful courses? All natural men love natural men. All profligate men love profligate men. All worldly men love worldly men. So our Saviour taught his disciples. "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own." Worldly men love those false teachers who allow them to follow the practice of worldlings. Such teachers, the apostle says, "are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them." The men of the world all love one another, because they justify one another in their sinful views, feelings, and conduct. And as they all love one another, so they are all naturally disposed to follow one another's evil examples.

If men had not been naturally disposed to follow those who do evil, can we account for it that Cain and his posterity should have gradually and universally corrupted the posterity of Seth, Enoch, and of all the pious patriarchs before Abraham? If men were not naturally disposed to follow bad examples rather than good, can we account for it that Jeroboam the son of Ne-

bat could have drawn ten tribes out of twelve into the grossest idolatry, from age to age, while two tribes continued to acknowledge and worship the only living and true God? If men were not naturally disposed to follow bad examples rather than good, can we account for it that Phygellus and Hermogenes could have turned away all Asia from embracing the doctrines which Paul taught, to follow their fatal errors and delusions? If men were not naturally disposed to follow bad examples rather than good, can we account for it that the Pope of Rome could have drawn nearly three parts out of eight of the whole christian world, to embrace his fatal errors, instead of the pure doctrines of the gospel? Or, if men were not naturally disposed to follow bad examples rather than good, can we account for it that there has always been such a great majority of bad rather than of good men in the world? It is certain that God has exhibited more numerous, more reasonable, and far more weighty motives before their minds, to be followers of that which is good, than to be followers of that which is evil. Scripture, reason, observation and experience unitedly prove, that every person in the world is naturally disposed to follow a multitude to do evil. But,

III. The prohibition in the text implies that those are altogether criminal who follow the evil examples of evil-doers, though they are the great majority of mankind. For,

1. They are free and voluntary in following the examples of those who do evil. Men may feel themselves constrained to obey a command, but they never feel themselves constrained to follow an example. Examples have no power or influence to compel, but only to persuade. Every person is at perfect liberty to approve or disapprove, and to follow or refuse to follow, any bad example. But to follow a bad example of choice, is to choose to do evil; which is in its own nature criminal. In some cases, it may be as criminal to follow a bad example, as to set a bad example; and in some cases, a great deal more criminal. Many persons set a bad example, when they have no clear and extensive view of its extremely sinful and destructive tendency; but others may have a clear knowledge of its great criminality and dangerous tendency, while, at the same time, they freely and voluntarily follow it. So that, in all cases, those who follow, as well as those who set bad examples, are altogether criminal. They do evil freely and voluntarily; which is the essence of criminality, and which appears so to themselves and every body else.

2. Every person acts contrary to his reason and conscience in following a multitude to do evil, which renders him altogether criminal and inexcusable. If one man does wrong, that

cannot make it right for another man to follow his example. Or if a multitude do wrong, that cannot make it right for any others to follow their example. Every man's reason and conscience tell him this is true. Though many unthinking persons may view it strange that a multitude should do what they might or do know to be wrong, yet there is nothing uncommon or strange in it; since the great majority of mankind have a heart in them fully set to do evil. It is as natural for them to do evil, as to think, or speak, or act. Their hearts are full of evil, and all their actions flow from their evil hearts. There are only a few, that ever do good; and none, that always do good. The bare circumstance that the multitude set an example, is so far from being a clear evidence of its being right, that it is a presumptive evidence of its being really wrong. Every individual, therefore, ought to examine the example of the multitude, and ask his reason and conscience whether it be right, before he presumes to follow it. What if a multitude are profane, or dishonest, or intemperate? Does their example make profaneness, or dishonesty, or intemperance right? Every man's reason and conscience will tell him, if he consults these internal guides to duty, that such examples are wrong, though thousands inconsiderately follow them. The practice of the multitude cannot make any thing reputable, which is in its own nature sinful. Men are extremely apt to follow a multitude to do evil, because they imagine that it is honorable to follow the customs and manners which the men of the world practice, approve and applaud. But this is an egregious and criminal mistake. No custom, practice or example can be reputable, which is sinful, and contrary to a man's reason and conscience, though it be ever so much approved, and highly esteemed by the multitude. Nor can the practice or opinion of the multitude render any mode of living and acting safe, which is in its own nature sinful and dangerous. The multitude, according to the representation of scripture, are walking in the broad road to destruction. They are habitually living and acting in a manner which directly tends to ruin them for ever; and, if they persist in their present course, however agreeable and reputable, it will plunge them in utter darkness and despair. The multitude, who set bad examples, cannot save themselves, nor those who follow them, from the fatal consequences of their evil conduct. Every person must know, if he consults his own reason and conscience, that it is not reasonable, nor reputable, nor safe, to follow a multitude to do evil; and, consequently, that it is altogether criminal and inexcusable to do it. Besides,

3. It is extremely criminal for any to follow a multitude to do evil, because it is direct rebellion against God. He ex-

pressly says to every one, without a single exception, "Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil." The prohibition is too plain to be misunderstood or explained away. Every person is capable of understanding it, and of feeling the infinite force and obligation of it. It is clothed with all the authority of the great Creator and supreme Lawgiver. God has enforced this prohibition by others more full and pointed. "My son," says he, "if sinners entice thee, consent thou not. Walk not in the way with them; refrain thy foot from their path. Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away. A companion of fools shall be destroyed." These are plain and solemn prohibitions, warnings, and admonitions, against following the evil examples of the wicked. Though God knows how agreeable evil examples are to a corrupt heart; how prone men are to follow them; and how ready they are to excuse themselves for acting with and under the influence and approbation of the multitude, to do evil; yet he positively forbids them to do it, for wise and good reasons. He knows that it is wrong for them to follow bad examples; he knows that he has a right to forbid their doing what is in its own nature criminal; and his benevolence disposes him to guard and restrain them from ruining themselves, by prohibitions sanctioned by his infinite authority. There is no kind of difficulty in obeying the prohibitions, cautions, and admonitions God has given them to avoid or refrain from following the multitude to do evil, but what lies in their hearts; which they ought to keep with all diligence.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. If men are apt to follow bad examples, as has been said, then there is reason to think that bad examples are the great source of moral corruption in every part of the world. The great majority of mankind have unholy hearts, which are totally devoid of every holy and virtuous affection; and under the influence of such corrupt hearts they uniformly and constantly act; and of course, they must constantly be doing evil, and setting evil examples, which all who see them are naturally disposed to follow. There are as many more bad examples than good ones, in the world, as there are more bad men than good ones, in the world. Though it be not true, that every person would be good, were he not led into sin by bad examples, yet it is true that there would be far less wickedness in the world, were it not for the corrupting influence of bad examples. What corrupted the ancient people of God so much, as

the examples of their idolatrous neighbors; of the idolatrous individuals of the seven nations of Canaan, which they suffered to live among him, contrary to the divine commands to expel them entirely; and of their wicked kings, judges, and subordinate rulers? What corrupted the seven churches of Asia so much, as the bad examples of false teachers and false professors? What has corrupted all Europe so much in twenty or thirty years past, as the corrupt examples of the most corrupt nation in the world? What has corrupted America so much, as the extensive prevalence and influence of bad examples, in the course of thirty or forty years? How fast are bad examples increasing every where; and how powerfully and rapidly are they producing every species of moral corruption among us! How many are setting examples of the grossest errors and delusions! How many are setting examples of sabbath-breaking, profaneness, intemperance, injustice, and total neglect of divine ordinances! And how many are constantly following these corrupt examples of the multitude! This great majority are both corrupting and bearing down the small minority of the godly, by their pernicious examples. The scripture assures us, that when iniquity abounds, the love of many will wax cold. The godly as well as others, are naturally bent to backsliding, by following the multitude to do evil. This has always been found to be the unhappy case in every age of the world. When bad examples become common and familiar, they lose much of their odious and repulsive appearance, and seem so harmless as to deceive and ensnare the righteous, who are far from moral perfection.

2. If men are naturally disposed to follow the multitude to do evil; then the truly godly have much more concern in spreading moral corruption, and obstructing the cause of religion, than they are apt to imagine. Though they are the salt of the earth, yet they often lose their purifying savor; and though they are the light of the world, yet they are apt to neglect trimming their lamps, which never fails to cause their light to grow dim. Though they heartily hate, and zealously oppose, some bad practices of the multitude, yet they often countenance, wink at, and symbolize with them in others. Yea, they too often do more than this; they not only follow the bad examples of the world, but set bad examples themselves. They are like "a cake not turned." Though they are guarded and invulnerable on one side, they are not so on another. Though they seldom or never set *some* bad examples, yet they frequently set some examples injurious to themselves and others. For there is no man that liveth, and sinneth not. The bad examples of good men are generally more criminal,

and more corrupting, than those of the multitude. The comparatively few bad examples which the godly set, and the few bad examples they follow, have a very great influence in spreading moral corruption, at any time; and especially in a day of great declension in religion. The pious minority always have too great a concern in corrupting the ungodly majority. This, good men of old were very sensible of, and sincerely lamented it on days of fasting and humiliation. Read the prayers of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Daniel, on such occasions. They lament their own sins, the sins of their fathers, the sins of the prophets, priests, rulers, and the best men in the nation. They knew that they all had set and followed bad examples, and become implicated with the great majority of transgressors, in national guilt. It is as true now, as ever it was, that the godly as well as the ungodly have abundant reason to humble themselves, on account of the abounding of iniquity.

3. Since men are naturally disposed to follow the bad examples of the multitude, it is easy to see why a people, declining in religion, are so apt to be insensible of their religious declensions. They always are very insensible of it. This was the case in the prophet's day. God complained of Ephraim, that "he had gray hairs here and there upon him, yet he knoweth it not." The reason is assigned. "Ephraim hath mixed himself among the people." Good men had mixed themselves with bad, and mutually followed each other's bad examples, and gradually corrupted one another, by mutually setting and following bad examples. The minority of the godly mixed with the great majority of the ungodly, and, through fear or favor, followed their bad examples, till gradually they set bad examples themselves, and so became blind to the common declension.

There was a great and general declension among the professed people of God in Christ's day. They were extremely corrupt, both in opinions and practice. But the great majority thought themselves fast approaching to perfection, and the best viewed themselves as already perfect and blameless. The Pharisees did; and Paul acknowledged that he was one of the number, and thought himself entirely blameless in point of obedience to the law. The case was, that both teachers and those who were taught, had mutually led one another into the most fatal errors and destructive practices. "They said to their seers, see not; and to the prophets, prophesy not unto us right things; speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits." They loved to hear the doctrines of men rather than the commandments of God, and to follow their own traditions, rather than the duties required in the Bible. And a perfect conformity to

their own traditions they deemed perfect conformity to the will of God. They all degenerated together, and therefore could not see nor believe that they had degenerated at all.

Moral declension has the same blinding and stupifying influence upon a religious people at this day. The minority follow the bad examples of the majority till they mix with them, and it is difficult to perceive any great distinction between them. If the great majority agree to disregard the Sabbath as holy time, or neglect family worship as an uncommanded duty, or neglect attending public worship half, or all the day, or disbelieve the Bible, or deny the essential doctrines of it, or neglect family government, or allow and practice vain and sinful and demoralizing amusements, or despise and oppose the virtuous habits of their fathers, — the minority inwardly approve and gradually follow the current of corruption. Is not this visible all over New England, and even among ourselves? Is there a fashionable evil among the multitude that the minority do not more or less approve, patronize and practice? Is it strange that moral declension is so little perceived, lamented, and restrained? The cause is obvious. The minority are blended with the majority, and they are all imperceptibly declining together.

4. If all men are naturally disposed to follow the multitude to do evil, then the rising generation are always in a peculiarly dangerous situation. They are the most inclined to follow examples in general, and bad examples in particular. They come into the world depraved and ignorant; and their depravity and ignorance concur to make them dependent upon others, to instruct and guide them through childhood and youth, until they come to years of maturity and self-direction. They are continually watching the examples of their parents, of their associates, and of all whom they deem wiser than themselves. And the great majority of all these are pursuing evil and setting evil examples, which are both agreeable and corrupting to the young. They are surrounded by dangers on every side and in every place. The great majority of their guides are unwise, unfaithful, and extremely deceptive. They are in imminent danger of growing up in ignorance, stupidity, and contempt of every thing sacred and divine; and of becoming prepared to act a nefarious part on the stage of life. This was exemplified in the generation that rose up after Joshua, and the elders that outlived Joshua. They brought on a dreadful declension, which continued through the times of the Judges, until the days of David. All children are in danger of being seduced and destroyed by bad examples, the descendants of the most pious and faithful parents not ex-

cepted. They all live and grow up in a world that lies in wickedness, which they naturally love; and they are fond of following the examples of the great majority of its inhabitants. The rising generation in this place have fallen upon evil times, and stand exposed to be guided and ruined by the great majority of evil-doers. They are to be pitied, instructed, and guarded, as much as possible. They are not constrained, though persuaded, to follow bad examples. They are capable of seeing the distinction between right and wrong examples, and of following the right and shunning the wrong. But there is but one way to do it; and that is, to remember their Creator in the days of their youth. This way God has pointed out, and commanded them to take, as they value the happiness of their precious and immortal souls.

5. If it be criminal to follow bad examples, it must be far more criminal to set bad examples. Those who follow bad examples often act inconsiderately, and under very plausible and alluring motives; which, though they do not excuse them, yet extenuate and lessen their criminality. But those who set bad examples generally act deliberately, and with a design to deceive, seduce, and persuade others to follow them. They endeavor to make others believe that their examples are right, are reputable, and harmless. They employ their superior knowledge, superior art, and superior reputation, to persuade others, inferior to them in all these respects, to walk in the paths of the destroyer. This is an expression of the subtilty and malignity of the great deceiver, and partakes of the highest kind of criminality. Such persons do as evil things as they can; and are as wicked as they can be. They designedly exert themselves to the utmost to destroy the eternal, as well as the temporal good of their fellow men. God stigmatizes such corrupters in his word, with the highest marks of his abhorrence and detestation. What a black character has he given of Manasseh, and of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin! And the Apostle Jude gives an odious and detestable picture of corrupters. He pronounces a dreadful wo upon them. He calls them, "Clouds without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, twice dead, plucked up by the roots; raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever." This is a peculiar description of errorists, who corrupt and deceive men by their false and pernicious sentiments, as well as by their other evil examples. Of all sinners, corrupters of the sentiments and practice of others, are the most criminal; and stand condemned to the severest marks of God's everlasting displeasure.

6. If men are naturally disposed to follow the multitude to do evil, then every one in a state of nature has great reason to fear that he shall live and die in his present unsanctified and impenitent state. The great majority around are in such a state, and walking together heart and hand in the broad road to destruction. This is the case of the impenitent child, the impenitent youth, and the impenitent professor. You know that God has forbidden you to follow a multitude to do evil; you know that you always have, since you can remember, followed the multitude of evil-doers; you know that you still love to follow them, and that they love to have you follow them, and are constantly persuading you, by their words and actions, to follow them. What ground then have you to hope that you shall ever leave following them, till you die, and go into a miserable eternity? I speak to you, as capable of understanding truth as well as error, and good examples as well as bad examples. And with all your knowledge, and in the face of all divine prohibitions, warnings, and admonitions, it is your present intention to follow the multitude. What, or who then, can prevent it? You will not prevent it. You will not suffer others to prevent it. It is true God can prevent it; but what reason have you to expect that he will prevent it? He has threatened to destroy you. He is able to destroy you. He can display his glory by destroying, as well as by saving you. Your belonging to the majority will not help you to turn about, but powerfully tend to hinder you. What will you say when he punishes you?

7. If men are naturally disposed to follow the multitude to do evil, not only in Europe, but in America, and not only in America, but in Massachusetts; is there not a great occasion for keeping this day of public fasting and prayer, and of keeping it sincerely? But who will or can keep this fast sincerely? The answer is plain. Not the majority, but a small minority. You are called to mix with the great majority in the duties of this day, because you have mixed with them before, in setting and following bad examples. Let each one ask himself, what have I done to bring on the present declension? Have I neglected this or that duty? Have I set, or followed, this or that bad example? You have all, serious duties to do. To repent — reform — and pray.

SERMON XXVI.

THE DISPLEASURE OF GOD WITH ALL WHO ARE PLEASED WITH SIN.

ANNUAL FAST, APRIL 5, 1822.

Who, knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death; not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them. — Romans, i. 32.

Though Paul was the especial apostle of the Gentiles, yet he did not plant the first christian church in Rome, which was the metropolis of the heathen world. But he tells them in this epistle, that by what he had heard of their faith and purity, he had been led to pray for their spiritual prosperity, and to come to them and impart to them some spiritual gift. For says he, "I am debtor both to the Greeks and to the barbarians, both to the wise and to the unwise. So as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also. For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." But as he had been hindered, and did not know how much longer he might be hindered, from coming to Rome, he determined in the mean time to write this epistle to them, in which he gives them a clearer and more extensive view of the whole gospel scheme of salvation, than they ever had opportunity of gaining. Accordingly, he begins at the very foundation of the gospel, and proves the universal and total depravity of mankind, which exposes them to the everlasting displeasure of God. And to make this appear, he describes the native character and condition of both Jews and Gentiles. He represents them all as involved in the deepest moral corruption, and as disposed both to do and to approve,

what they knew was displeasing to God. "Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them." The plain sense of the text may be expressed in this general observation:

That sinners are disposed not only to do things which they know are displeasing to God, but to take pleasure in seeing others do things which are displeasing to him. I shall show,

I. That sinners are disposed to do things which they know are displeasing to God. And,

II. That they also take pleasure in seeing others do things which are displeasing to him.

I. I am to show that sinners do things which they know are displeasing to God.

God has given us the history of the conduct of mankind, for more than four thousand years, from the first apostacy to the death of the last of the apostles. By this it clearly appears that they are by nature totally and universally depraved, and that their hearts are fully set in them to do things which they know are displeasing to God. They have always been capable of knowing, loving and obeying their Maker. But whenever they have discovered his will, whether by the light of nature or by the commands he has given them, they have always been naturally disposed to act in direct contrariety to it. This has been made visibly to appear by the vast variety of circumstances under which they have been placed in every age and in every part of the world. The apostle tells us in the first place, that God has condemned the heathen world for doing things which they knew were displeasing to him. He says, "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;" that is, those who disregard and disobey the known will of God. He goes on to say, "Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath showed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and godhead; so that they are without excuse: Because that when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful, but became vain in their imagination, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools: and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man." And after drawing a more odious and disgusting picture of their character and conduct, he sums it up in the words of our text. "Who, knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such

things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them." After this description of the Gentiles, he gives a description of the moral corruption and criminality of the Jews. "Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art, that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself: for thou that judgest, dost the same things. But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth, against them that commit such things. And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them that do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God? Behold, thou art called a Jew, and restest in the law, and makest thy boast of God, and knowest his will, and approvest the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law. Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking of the law, dishonorest thou God?" From this description of the Jews, who notwithstanding their deep depravity boasted of their superior goodness, the apostle draws a just and general conclusion. What then! are we (Jews) better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved, both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; as it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one. There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable: there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood. Destruction and misery are in their ways: and the way of peace have they not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes. Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God." But what are all the world guilty of? The apostle tells us, and what he tells us is true. They are guilty of doing things which they know are displeasing to God. The heathen are guilty of doing things which they know the law of nature forbids, and therefore must be displeasing to the God of nature. The Jews are guilty of doing things which they know God forbids in his word, and therefore must be displeasing to him. And this is true of all men under the gospel, who are in a state of nature. They know that God forbids them to love themselves supremely; but they do love themselves supremely. God forbids them to love the world supremely; but they do love the world supremely. God forbids them to disobey his commands; but they do disobey them. God forbids them to hate him; but they both see and

hate him. God forbids them to disbelieve and reject the gospel; but they do disbelieve and reject it. They persist in a constant course of disobedience to God, though they know it is displeasing to him, and that he has revealed his wrath from heaven against them. Though they know that they are worthy of death for displeasing God, yet they will persist in displeasing him, notwithstanding death appears to be their certain doom.

II. They take pleasure in seeing others take the same path to ruin. The apostle says, they not only do things which are displeasing to God, and worthy of death, but have pleasure in others who take pleasure in displeasing God. They not only disobey and displease God themselves, but they take pleasure in seeing others disobey and displease him. This the apostle asserts, and it must be true, whether we can account for it or not. But it will be easy to account for it, if we consider the following things.

1. That they love one another. They are all by nature possessed of the same selfish heart. And it is very reasonable to suppose, that, since the same selfish spirit is common to them all, notwithstanding the great diversity in their external conduct, they love one another because they are sinners, and not saints. This supposition is greatly corroborated by the representation which the sacred writers give of them. Solomon represents them as united in affection, and "joined hand in hand." He says, "an unjust man is an abomination to the just; and he that is upright in the way is abomination to the wicked." And again he says, "As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man." But Christ is still more explicit upon this subject. He says repeatedly, "that sinners love those that love them." And he tells his disciples that this selfish spirit is essential to their character. "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." Now if sinners love one another because they are sinners in distinction from saints, they must be pleased to see their own spirit acted out by one another. Sinners always love selfishness in themselves and others, though they do not always love the effects of it. These are often injurious to them. Selfishness often leads them to contend with one another. In such cases the parties hate the effects of selfishness. But whenever selfishness does not appear to hurt, but promotes their interests, they approve of it, and are pleased not only in exercising it themselves, but in seeing it exercised by others. The men of the world admire a

spirit of selfishness much more than a spirit of pure benevolence; and no men have been so much admired and applauded as the Alexanders and Cæsars, the conquerors and enslavers of their fellow men. The men of the world universally approve the spirit of the world, and are pleased to see one another act it out without the least reserve; though they know it is infinitely displeasing to God.

2. As sinners possess one and the same selfish and sinful heart, so they are heartily united in opposing one and the same holy and benevolent cause. God has formed a most holy and benevolent design, to raise up from the ruins of the apostacy a glorious spiritual kingdom, composed of holy and benevolent subjects. This design he formed in eternity; and from the beginning of time to this day, he has been constantly and irresistibly carrying it into effect. But sinners have always been united heart and hand in opposing this great and glorious design, though they have generally been disposed to deny their enmity and opposition to it. Different nations in different parts of the world have acted very different parts in carrying on their united design. This appears from the various accounts, which the inspired writers have given, of their views and operations in different ages and different parts of this degenerate world. David in addressing the throne of grace upon this subject said, "Lo, thine enemies make a tumult; and they that hate thee have lifted up the head. They have taken crafty counsel against thy people, and consulted against thy hidden ones. They have said, Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation: that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance. For they have consulted together with one consent; they are confederate against thee: the tabernacles of Edom, and the Ishmaelites; Gebal, and Ammon, and Amalek; the Philistines with the inhabitants of Tyre; Assur also is joined with them; they have holpen the children of Lot." All these nations were combined together for the purpose of opposing God and his people Israel, who were his church. With still greater fervency and importunity, David implores the divine interposition in favor of the church against her bold and mortal enemies. "O God! why hast thou cast us off for ever? why doth thine anger smoke against the sheep of thy pasture? Remember thy congregation which thou hast purchased of old; the rod of thine inheritance, which thou hast redeemed; this mount Zion, wherein thou hast dwelt. Lift up thy feet unto the perpetual desolations, even all that the enemy hath done in the sanctuary. They said in their hearts, Let us destroy them together. We see not our signs; there is no more any prophet: neither is there among us any that knoweth how long." Such were the united and numerous

enemies of the church before the gospel day. Nor have they been less numerous, less united, or less zealous in opposing the christian church. The prediction of their character and conduct has long been fulfilling. "The heathen have raged, and the people have imagined a vain thing. The kings of the earth have set themselves, and the rulers have taken counsel together against the Lord, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us." The great majority of the greatest nations of the earth have been, and still are united in their views, and feelings, and conduct, towards the church of Christ. Indeed, it appears from the whole history, which the inspired writers have given of the character of sinners, that they are all hostile to the cause which God is carrying on, and is engaged to promote. And this union of affection, intention and design of sinners, operates like all other unions of design. Those who are united in any design, are always pleased with the part which they act in promoting it, and of course are no less, but often more pleased with the various parts which others act in promoting the same design; whether they do the same things that they do, or other things which have the same tendency. As all sinners heartily wish that God's gracious and eternal designs may be frustrated and defeated; so they have pleasure in seeing any of their fellow men doing what they think has a tendency to frustrate the decrees of God, and his operations to carry them into effect. They are pleased to hear any body speak against his decrees, or argue against them, or do any thing which they imagine brings them into disbelief or disesteem. It is always pleasing to those who are opposing any cause, to see others oppose it, though not in the same manner, or by the same means they do. All therefore who take pleasure in doing things which they know are displeasing to God, take pleasure also in seeing others do things, which are as much or more displeasing to him. This leads me to observe,

3. That it appears from general observation and experience, that those who do things which they know are displeasing to God, take pleasure in seeing others do things which they know are displeasing to him. Those who disbelieve the existence of God, are pleased to hear others say that they believe there is no God. Those who disbelieve the inspiration of the Bible, are pleased to hear others say that they believe it is a cunningly devised fable. Those who disbelieve the doctrine of the trinity, the doctrine of divine decrees, the doctrine of election, the doctrine of predestination, the doctrine of atonement, the doctrine of total depravity, the doctrine of disinterested benevolence, the doctrine of regeneration, and the doctrine of

saints' perseverance, are always pleased to hear others say that they disbelieve all these doctrines. Those who disbelieve that the Sabbath is a divine institution, love to hear others say that they disbelieve that it is more holy and sacred than any other day. Those who profane the Sabbath by laboring, travelling, visiting, or neglecting public worship, are pleased to see others do any or all these things. Those who behave disorderly in the house of God, and in time of public worship, are pleased to see others guilty of the same conduct. Those who take the name of God in vain, love to hear others take his name in vain. Those who practice card-playing, love to see other gamesters. Those who practice tavern-haunting, love to see others do the same. Those who practice vain and sinful amusements, love to see others practice the same or more sinful and corrupting amusements. Those who are ambitious, love to see others ambitious. Those who are worldly minded, love to see others worldly minded. Those who are idle, love to see others idle. Those who are prodigal, love to see others prodigal. Those who neglect family religion, love to see others neglect it. Those who despise all religion, love to see others despise it. There is, in a word, nothing that men do, which they know is displeasing to God, but what they love to see others do. For the truth of these observations, I appeal to all who do things that they know are displeasing to God. There is nothing that God has said about the character and conduct of sinners, but they do or may know to be true, by the dictates of their own consciences. He searches and knows the hearts of men perfectly. And if we consult his word from beginning to end, we shall find that he has given a true description of every natural heart, and of every natural man; and, according to his description, it is certain that every natural man loves to do what he knows is displeasing to God, and to see others do the same.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. If sinners love to do things which they know are displeasing to God, then they never refrain from doing any thing merely because they know it will be displeasing to him. They know what is pleasing to themselves, and they mean to do what is pleasing to themselves, though they know it will be displeasing to God. They habitually do those things which are pleasing to themselves, though they know that God will be displeased. Merely his displeasure has no restraining influence upon them in any case whatever. It is true that in some cases the fear of feeling the marks of God's displeasure does

actually restrain them from doing what they would otherwise wish to do. They are like disobedient children and disobedient servants. A disobedient child will always do what is agreeable to his own corrupt heart, though he knows it will be disagreeable to his parents, unless he fears the painful marks of their displeasure. And a disobedient servant will do whatever he pleases, unless he fears he shall suffer some disagreeable marks of his master's displeasure. Just so sinners always mean to do whatever is gratifying to their own corrupt hearts, though they know they shall displease God, unless they fear the painful consequences of the divine displeasure. It is the fear and not the love of God, that restrains sinners from doing any evil action, or pursuing any evil course. Indeed, they often refrain from doing what God has forbidden, not only from fear of punishment, but from the inconsistency of their own selfish affections; their pride, their ambition, their reputation, their worldly interests, often restrain them from doing what God has forbidden. But merely a sense of his displeasure never restrains them from walking in the way of their hearts and in the sight of their eyes.

2. If sinners love to do things which they know are displeasing to God, then they never do any thing merely to please him. Though they do a great many things which he has required them to do, yet they never do any thing merely for the sake of obeying or pleasing him. If they labor, they labor to please themselves, and not him. If they read his word, they read it to please themselves, and not him. If they attend public worship, they attend to please themselves, and not him. If they keep their foot when they go into the house of the Lord, they do it to please themselves, and not him. If they externally observe days of fasting, humiliation, and prayer, they do it to please themselves, and not him. If they feed the hungry, and clothe the naked, and promote the benefit of civil and religious society, they do these things to please themselves, and not him. Merely to please God is never any motive with them to do any thing that he has required. They generally feel, and act, and live, just as they please, without the least regard to his glory or pleasure. Generally, I say, because there are some exceptions. In times of trouble, in scenes of danger, and in the view of future and eternal misery, they often read and pray, seek and strive, with a desire and hope to move God to show them favor. But they have as much concern for themselves, and as little concern for pleasing and glorifying God, at such seasons and in such cases, as they have when they cast off fear, and restrain prayer, and indulge every worldly affection. They are like Israel, whom God calls an empty vine, because he brings

forth fruit to himself. Those who love to do things which they know are displeasing to God can never love to do things merely to please him. Their carnal mind, which is a selfish heart, and enmity against God, can never dispose them to be subject to his law, nor to take pleasure in pleasing him. Accordingly God has told them, that he has never required them to tread his courts, to fast and pray, to please themselves; and that when they do such things to please themselves, their fasting, and praying, and solemn services, are an abomination in his sight, and he is weary to bear them.

3. If sinners love to do things that they know are displeasing to God, and take pleasure in seeing others act from the same selfish and sinful principle, then no external means nor motives are sufficient to restrain them from sin, and induce them to love and please God. They sin with their eyes wide open. They know what would please God, but they do not desire to please him; and they know what will displease him, and they desire to displease him, in order to please themselves. And since the displeasure of God will not restrain them from disobedience, nor the pleasure of God will allure them to obedience; no means nor motives are sufficient to restrain, or reform, or bring them to repentance. They are, to human view, beyond all hopes of recovery, and God represents them so in his view. He asks them, "Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more. The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head, there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores; they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment." Means have had no healing effect; and therefore God says that their case is desperate. "The bellows are burned, the lead is consumed of the fire; the founder melteth in vain; for the wicked are not plucked away. Reprobate silver shall men call them, because the Lord hath rejected them." They sin with their eyes wide open. They persist in doing those things and pursuing those evil courses, which they know are displeasing to God, and for which they are worthy of death; and when they break over this strongest restraint, what greater restraint can be laid upon them, or what more effectual means can be used with them? They are past recovery, and it seems they must die.

4. If sinners not only do things which they know are displeasing to God, but take pleasure in seeing others do the same things; then they are guilty not only of their own sins, but of all the sins of others, which they see and approve. He that approves of another man's sin, is as really guilty of that sin, as the actual transgressor, and may be much more criminal. God

charges every one with that sin of others, which they see and approve. God says to the sinner, "When thou sawest a thief, then thou consentedst with him;" implying that he was guilty of the theft, which he approved of in the thief. And every one knows that this holds true of a gang of thieves; each one is guilty of every theft which he knows any of the company commits. But we find in scripture a still more striking illustration of this point. At the solicitation and approbation of the children of Israel, Aaron made a molten image, or golden calf, for the purpose of religious worship. This was an heinous sin in Aaron; but the people were as guilty as he in approving of it. And God punished them as severely. It is said, "The Lord plagued the people, because they made the calf which Aaron made;" and about three thousand of them fell that day." Those who take pleasure in seeing other men sin, are guilty of all the sin they see committed and approve of. And the approvers are often more guilty and criminal than the actors. Parents who allow their children to swear, are more guilty than their children that swear. Parents who allow their children to profane the Sabbath, are more guilty than their children that profane it. Parents who allow their children to game, are more guilty than their children that game. Parents who allow their children to attend balls and haunt taverns, are more guilty than their children that do these things. Executive officers, who see and approve of those who break the laws of the land, are more guilty than the actual transgressors. The reason is, that in all these cases, the approvers know more than the actors, and are under stronger obligations to disapprove, condemn and restrain those who are under their care, instruction and government, than the transgressors are to refrain from their evil courses. And where there is no such mutual obligation to govern and to obey, those who see others do things which they know are displeasing to God, and take pleasure in seeing such things, are as guilty as those who do them. Those who do not neglect public worship themselves, but approve of others in neglecting it, are as guilty as the neglecters. Those who do not go to hear erroneous preachers, but approve of others in going, are as guilty as those who go. This will apply to all similar cases. But if this be true, how much more guilty are mankind than they are apt to imagine! They are guilty not only of their own actual transgressions, but of ten thousand transgressions of others, which they never committed.

5. If men are guilty of all the sins which they know and approve of, then we may see what it is to be guilty of national sins. It is to approve of those sins, which the majority of a nation commit and approve of. And, in this view, it is easy

to see that one nation may be guilty of the sins of another nation. Our nation may be guilty of the prevailing sins of Britain, or of France, or of Europe, Asia, Africa, and South America. One state may be guilty of the sins of another state; one country may be guilty of the sins of another country; one town may be guilty of the sins of another town; one parish may be guilty of the sins of another parish; and one family may be guilty of the sins of another family. And when the majority of a nation approve of any sins, those sins are properly national sins. Now let me ask, do not many and great national sins abound among us? Do not the great majority of our nation approve of Sabbath-breaking, profane swearing, gaming, intemperance, prodigality, neglect of public worship, heresy, and every species of licentiousness? I do not mean, that the great majority actually commit these national sins; but do they not approve of them in our larger cities, in our larger towns, and in our smaller societies? Does not our nation approve of oppression in one form, and slavery in another? And do not the great majority reject the gospel in one form or other; which must, after all our high pretensions, characterize us an irreligious and degenerate people in the eyes of God and man?

6. It appears from what has been said, that the people in this State have great cause of humiliation, fasting, and prayer, this day. Though they were once the freest from national sins of any state in New England and America; and though they have had the greatest variety of religious means used with them, to restrain, reform, and make them holy and virtuous; yet they have rapidly and notoriously gone down with the current of moral corruption for twenty or thirty years past. Many do those things which they know are displeasing to God, and many more approve of other men's sins, which fastens a great load of guilt upon them. Indeed, men of all ages, of all classes, and of all conditions, are guilty of national sins, and have contributed to increase the weight of national guilt, and to spread the general corruption of the nation. There is too much reason to think that national sins are committed, and not only so, but approved of, in every town and religious society in this Commonwealth. And it is owing to the united feelings of those who do things which they know are displeasing to God, and of those who approve of such things, that it appears morally impossible to bring about a national reformation. If none in the nation would approve of those who knowingly and externally disobey God, the disobedient might be easily every where reformed. If none who are not Sabbath-breakers, nor profane swearers, nor tavern-haunters, nor gamesters, nor in any respect licentious, would approve those that are, these

might be easily reformed by our legislators, our executive officers, and our public instructers in religion. But reformers have little power, and less fortitude, zeal, and resolution, to reprove, condemn, and suppress national sins, which, though not committed, are allowed and approved of, by the highest in power, in learning, in wealth, in reputation and influence. The visible and actual transgressors generally in every state, and in every town, and in every village, know who are their approvers, their patrons and protectors; which inspires them to bid defiance to all reformers, whether parents, masters, civil officers, or religious instructers. Now if this be a just representation of this State and of this nation, is there not abundant reason for all the people in every religious society to meet together for the solemn purpose of humiliation, fasting, and prayer? Ought not our religious assemblies to be crowded with transgressors, penitents, and reformers, on this day required to be set apart for these duties? But is there any reason to believe that the houses of God are now crowded with those who need to be in them? If not, what is the loud language of their conduct? You have been solicitous to know whether the meetings in this State were crowded on Monday last. Why? Because you thought the object of meeting was interesting and important. But will you be as solicitous to know whether the meetings on this day have been full and solemn? Or will you be solicitous to have it known whether this house was crowded and solemn, or not? It is probable you will not. But why? Because the object of the meeting was of no great consequence. These are and will be the feelings of all those who mean to do things which they know are displeasing to God, and of those who mean to approve of them. Your services this day, then, you have no reason to expect God will approve, but condemn; and instead of going down to your houses justified as the sincere penitent did, you will go home under a greater weight of guilt, and a heavier condemnation.

I now turn to those who have sighed and cried on account of the national sins which abound in this and other places. Though you cannot wholly excuse yourselves from having any share in the national guilt, yet you will lament and mourn for it, every family apart, and every person apart. And though you despair of a reformation through men or means, you will trust in God to carry on his own great designs here and in other places through the nation. He has not removed his candlesticks out of his churches, nor every where withdrawn the sanctifying influences of his spirit. He can reform a whole nation, as he from time to time did his ancient chosen people. And your services may have a powerful and happy influence in

drawing down blessings upon this place and upon this nation. If ten righteous men in this one place, and fifty in another place, and an hundred in another, should sincerely humble themselves, and cordially unite in praying for the converting, sanctifying and reforming influences of the divine spirit, their fervent, effectual intercessions would avail much to move God to arise and plead his own cause in this place, in this State, and in this nation. It is the very design of a day of public fasting, humiliation and prayer, to unite the hearts of all good men to call upon God for civil and religious, public and private blessings. General reformations always begin with individuals. It is not necessary however for individuals here to know how many will this day keep such a fast as God has chosen, in order to know and do their duty; though it be animating to believe that many are united with them. They know that the present state of this people, and especially of the rising generation, seriously calls for the prayers and exertions of the friends of God to promote their spiritual and eternal interests. The godly here are generally the aged, and if they have any thing to do for the young they must do it soon. Will you not adopt the resolution and language of Samuel in a similar case: "God forbid that I should cease to pray for you?"

SERMON XXVII.

THE DEPARTURE OF A PEOPLE FROM GOD.

ANNUAL FAST, APRIL 6, 1823.

WHY then is this people of Jerusalem slidden back by a perpetual backsliding? they hold fast deceit, they refuse to return. — JER. viii. 5.

THE Israelites were the peculiar people of God, whom he more highly favored than any other people in the world. He had peculiar reasons to expect that they would cleave to him, and pay a cheerful and constant obedience to the commands which he had given them for their good. It seems strange that they should ever forsake him, and stranger still that they should perpetually backslide, and refuse to return. He directs the prophet to go and tell them in his name, that their conduct appeared to him very unaccountable. "Moreover thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord, Shall they fall and not rise? shall he turn away and not return? Why then is this people of Jerusalem slidden back by a perpetual backsliding? They hold fast deceit, they refuse to return. I hearkened and heard, but they spake not aright: no man repented of his wickedness, saying, what have I done? every one turned to his course, as the horse rusheth into the battle. Yea, the stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed time; and the turtle, and the crane, and the swallow, observe the time of their coming: but my people know not the judgment of the Lord." Thus God the searcher of hearts represents his own peculiar people as bent to backsliding from him, notwithstanding all their solemn professions of love and obedience to him, and notwithstanding all the external forms of religion which they generally maintained and preserved amidst all their backslidings. This description will apply to any other religious people who are backsliding from God, and warrants us to say,

That when any religious people backslide from God, they will persist in backsliding. I shall consider,

I. What denominates a religious people.

II. What denominates a religious people a backsliding people. And,

III. Why such a backsliding people will persist in backsliding.

I. Let us consider what denominates a religious people.

The Jews were a religious people in distinction from all other nations, who were given to superstition and idolatry. They professed to believe the existence of the only living and true God. They professed to believe the truth and divinity of his holy word. They also externally maintained that public and social worship which he enjoined upon them. And so long as their external conduct agreed with their public profession, they were properly denominated a religious people. And so long as any other people make the same profession, and conduct in the same manner, they come under the same denomination. All the nations at this day, who profess to believe the truth of christianity, and who observe the public worship of God and the ordinances of the gospel, are called religious nations, though the great majority may be totally destitute of vital piety. It is the explicit profession and external conduct of a people that give them their religious character. Though we as a nation are not in covenant with God in the same sense that the Jews were, yet we either expressly or implicitly profess the true religion, and may be properly called a religious people. Let us next consider,

II. When a religious people may be said to be a backsliding one.

All nations derive their origin from the same stock. They are all the descendants of Adam. They are all alike sinful by nature. It is true some may be sanctified and reformed by grace. Yet grace, in the present state, does not entirely destroy nature. Large measures of moral corruption remain in the hearts of the best of men in the most religious nations. Their hearts are like a deceitful bow. While it appears to be bent right, it always has a tendency to spring back to its natural state. So, every people, who profess to believe the gospel and live under its influence, have something in them, that dislikes the character, the laws and the government of God. On this account, they are bent to backsliding from him. It appears from the character the scripture draws of every religious people in every age of the world, that they have always had a revolting and rebellious spirit. They have universally manifested a strong propensity to forget and forsake God. This is true of

every religious people at this day, whether they have experienced the common, or special influences of the divine spirit. Among every religious people, there is a great, if not the greatest part of them, who are under only the restraining, and not the sanctifying influence of the gospel. They, as a body, are perpetually prone to wander and love to wander from God. The question now before us is, when may a religious people be said to backslide from God? The answer to this question is very plain. It is when they break over such restraints as ought to keep them from backsliding from him; and they are perpetually backsliding, while they are constantly breaking over one restraint after another. This was the manner in which the people of God were perpetually backsliding in the days of the prophets. Every religious people, in backsliding from God, proceed gradually, and break over one restraint after another, which he has laid upon them.

In the first place, they break over the restraints of his goodness. God is good unto all, but more especially to a people who profess to love and serve him; and his goodness has an alluring and restraining influence upon them. It is suited to restrain both saints and sinners from disobedience. This strong and tender restraint he laid upon his backsliding people of old. "He drew them with the cords of a man, with the bands of love." He not only separated them from other nations, but raised them above them, in respect to national prosperity. He promised to make them the most numerous, the most wealthy, and the most respectable, nation on earth. He said they should be the head and not the tail; that they should lend to many nations and not borrow; that all the people of the earth should fear them; and that he would open his good treasures, and send them a profusion of all temporal good things, and bless them in their basket and store. These great and distinguishing promises he faithfully fulfilled, while they continued steadfast in his covenant, and persevered in obedience. So they had ample evidence of the continuance of the divine goodness while they continued grateful and obedient. But they soon broke over the kind restraint of divine goodness, and began and continued to backslide. This God resented, and appealed to them and to the world, whether they had any good reason for their ingratitude and backsliding. "Hear ye now what the Lord saith. Arise, contend before the mountains, and let the hills hear thy voice. Hear ye, O mountains, the Lord's controversy, and ye strong foundations of the earth: for the Lord hath a controversy with his people, and he will plead with Israel. O my people, what have I done unto thee? and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me. For I

brought thee up out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed thee out of the house of servants; and sent before thee Moses, Aaron, and Miriam. O my people, remember what Balak king of Moab consulted, and what Balaam son of Beor answered him, from Shittim unto Gilgal; that ye may know the righteousness of the Lord." So far as divine goodness could allure and restrain, God allured and restrained Israel from backsliding. But all his restraints of goodness were ineffectual. They would break over such tender ties, and backslide from their kind and constant benefactor. This is the character of every backsliding people. They despise the riches of divine goodness, and take occasion from the forbearance and long-suffering of God, to become more and more ungrateful, disobedient, and hardened in their evil courses.

In the next place, a religious people who are perpetually backsliding, grow worse and worse under the restraint of divine authority, as well as of divine goodness. God binds every religious people by the whole weight of his infinite authority, to obey all his precepts and prohibitions, without the least deviation or imperfection. He gave his peculiar people his judgments, his statutes, and his laws, which were far superior to those of any other nation. By these laws he made a high and strong partition wall between them and all other nations. He required them to worship him alone, and renounce the worship of all other gods; to trust in him to protect them from all their enemies; and to avoid connection and alliance with any other people. He prohibited them from going into the temples of the heathen, and from symbolizing with them in any of their customs, or manners, or modes of religious worship. These were sacred and strong restraints sanctioned by divine authority, to prevent their backsliding. Yet they were far more prone to forsake their own living and true God, than the heathen were to forsake their false gods. Of this, God pointedly upbraids them. "Hath a nation changed their gods? which are yet no gods; but my people have changed their glory for that which doth not profit. Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be ye horribly afraid, saith the Lord. For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." They despised divine authority, and cast the laws of God behind their backs, for which God severely reproves them in the words immediately following our text. "I hearkened and heard, but they spake not aright: no man repented him of his wickedness, saying, What have I done? Every one turned to his course, as the horse rusheth into the battle. Yea, the stork in the heaven knoweth

her appointed times; and the turtle, and the crane, and the swallow, observe the time of their coming: but my people know not the judgment of the Lord. How do ye say, We are wise, and the law of the Lord is with us? Lo, certainly in vain made he it: the pen of the scribes is in vain. The wise men are ashamed, they are dismayed and taken; lo, they have rejected the word of the Lord, and what wisdom is in them?" Such was the folly, perverseness and backsliding of God's people of old. Any people, who constantly violate the laws of God, and walk in their own ways, are perpetually backsliding from God.

There was another way by which God often laid a restraint upon his backsliding people, and that was by his rod of correction; but they often broke over this restraint, and persisted in their wicked ways. When they walked contrary to him, he walked contrary to them, and made them feel the bitter effects of their disobedience, by visiting them with his righteous judgments. So he expressly says by Jeremiah, "Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee; know therefore and see, that it is an evil thing and bitter that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, and that my fear is not in thee, saith the Lord God of hosts." God always held in his holy and sovereign hand the rod of correction, to restrain his backsliding people. He reserved some of the seven nations of Canaan to scourge them when they went astray. He held up before them the terrors of the sword, the pestilence and famine, to restrain them from evil. He often slew them by thousands and thousands for their national sins. But he plainly told them, that they had proved incorrigible under the rod of correction. "Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more." A perpetually backsliding people will hold fast deceit, and refuse to return to God from whom they have revolted, even under the severest tokens of his wrath. Such is the character of a perpetually backsliding people, that they will persist in their habitual course of sinning, and break over all the restraints of divine goodness, divine authority, and divine corrections.

I now proceed to show,

III. Why a backsliding people will persist in backsliding. This is owing to some great delusion. It seems as though no religious people would perpetually backslide from God, unless they were one way or other insensibly deceived or deluded. Accordingly we find that God himself ascribes the perpetual backsliding of his people to this, in the text. God puts the question and answers it. "Why is this people of Jerusalem, where I have nourished and brought them up, slidden back by

a perpetual backsliding?" He answers, "They hold fast deceit, they refuse to return." This was as much as to say that they would not perpetually backslide, but immediately return to him from whom they had backslidden, if they were not deceived, or under a strong insensible delusion. This holds true in respect to any perpetually backsliding people. They are always under a deep deception, or insensible delusion. And it is easy to see how they become insensibly deceived and deluded respecting their perpetually backsliding. There are several things which serve to deceive them, and to dispose them to hold fast their deception. And,

1. They delude themselves by backsliding very *gradually*. They do not throw off all restraints at once, and become totally vicious. They break over one restraint after another, gradually and slowly. They do not break over even one restraint at once. They gradually forget the goodness of God in one favor, and then in another. They first forget the goodness of God in one smaller favor, and then in another; and this leads them to forget God in greater and greater favors, until divine goodness loses all its restraining influence over them. In the same gradual and imperceptible manner they break over all the restraints of divine authority and of divine corrections. Such a gradual backsliding becomes more and more habitual, and of course more and more insensible. This is agreeable to the experience of all backsliders, whether saints or sinners. No religious person or people ever throw off all religious sobriety and morality at once. Those who have daily called upon God in secret, who have daily read his word and attended social worship, who have kept the Sabbath holy, and observed divine ordinances, and who have had a single eye to the glory of God in all their secular concerns and intercourse with their fellow men, never neglect all these duties at once. They begin to backslide by omitting one duty and then another, and by performing one duty and then another in a cold, formal, and insincere manner, until it becomes habitual to cast off fear and restrain prayer, and live to themselves instead of living to God. Thus a religious person and a religious people gradually and insensibly backslide more and more, and break over the powerful restraints which once kept them steadfast and unmovable in duty. In the same gradual and insensible manner, moral sinners become immoral, and the immoral grow worse and worse. The child who has been taught to use good language does not become profane all at once. The youth who has been taught to keep the Sabbath holy will not cease to regard its sanctity all at once. The temperate man never becomes intemperate all at once. A religious people never renounce

their religious and moral customs, habits, and manners, all at once. Moral and religious declensions are always gradual, because it takes time for men to eradicate from their minds the force of good example, good instruction, good education, and the dictates and remonstrances of conscience. Every backslider always feels self-condemned for the first instances of his deviation from the path of duty. But one deviation naturally leads to another, and serves to palliate it, till self-regret and self-reproach cease to operate, and men feel as easy and innocent in their gradual declensions, as they did before they began to backslide; and, like Ephraim, while they have gray hairs here and there upon them, they know it not. Though they have been long backsliding, yet they have declined from the ways of wisdom so gradually, that they are totally insensible how far they have departed from God and duty.

2. All backsliding consists in men's walking in the ways of their hearts, instead of walking in the ways of God's commandments. They backslide because they love to backslide; and what they love, they endeavor to persuade themselves is right. If they are reproved, they will justify rather than condemn their backsliding. The man who neglects secret and social prayer, will justify himself. The man who neglects public worship, will justify himself. The man who is profane, will justify himself. The man who labors, or visits, or travels, on the Lord's day, contrary to the laws of God and man, will justify himself. The intemperate always seeks some excuse to justify or at least to palliate his conduct. A false professor, who neglects all the plain and simple duties of his profession, will justify his irregular and unchristian conduct. The cause in all these cases is obvious. Backsliders love their backslidings and devious courses, and their evil hearts blind their reason and conscience, which involves them in a strong delusion to believe that, having loved idols, after idols they may safely go. They deceive themselves; and, after they have deceived themselves, they hold fast their deceit, and will not renounce it. Besides,

3. Backsliders are more or less under the blinding and deluding influence of the great adversary of souls. Look into the Old Testament, and there you will find that God ascribed much of the ingratitude, disobedience, hypocrisy and backsliding of his people to the seducing influence of Satan, who led them to symbolize with the heathen in worshipping and serving dumb idols and devils. All the heathen nations were then and are now under the seducing influence of the god of this world, the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience. Satan, who was first instrumental of introducing the apostacy of

Adam, has been the primary instrument of introducing the apostacies and declensions that brought on the destruction of the old world; the apostacies and declensions after the Flood; the apostacies and declensions in the Jewish church; the apostacies, declensions, errors and delusions that have existed, and now exist, in the christian church. How often and how solemnly do the apostles warn christians against the power, malignity and seducing influence of Satan! Peter says to all christians, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: whom resist steadfast in the faith." "For," says Paul, "we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand." And to the Corinthians he says, "I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ." Satan undoubtedly has as free and baleful access to the minds of saints and sinners now, as he ever had in times past; and is as capable of leading them into error, delusion and backsliding, as ever he was. He is now deluding all the heathen world, and insensibly involving them in fatal darkness, and leading them blindly to destruction. And he is more or less concerned in spreading errors and delusions in all the christian world, who love and hold fast deceit.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. It appears from the description of a religious people which has been given in this discourse, that we in this country deserve that character. In many respects, and especially in respect to religion, we resemble God's ancient people more than any other nation in the world. They originated from a pure stock; they descended from eminently pious ancestors. They were planted a choice vine, wholly a right seed, in the midst of the heathen nations. They were at first strict and sincere in obedience to the divine commands. This God reminded them of by the prophet Jeremiah, after they had fallen into a perpetual backsliding. "Go, and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, Thus saith the Lord. I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown. Israel was holiness unto the Lord, and the first fruits of his increase." In a similar manner our nation originated from noble and pious

ancestors; who came here from purely religious motives, and like Caleb, wholly followed the Lord. For several generations they maintained their purity, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord. Though they have gradually backslidden from time to time, and more rapidly for fifty, or forty, or thirty, or twenty years past, yet they claim the character of a religious people. They generally profess to believe the Bible, and the essential doctrines contained in it. They maintain the public worship of God and the ordinances of the gospel. They profess to regard the Sabbath as holy time, and to abstain from all worldly employments and recreations. And perhaps the Sabbath is still more generally kept, and public worship more generally attended by the American people, than by any other people in the world. We are certainly very much engaged in building churches and meeting-houses, and providing other places for religious worship. We also maintain more ministers of the gospel, according to our wealth and numbers, than any other religious people. And I may still add, that there is a larger proportion of pure religion and pious people here, than in any other christian country. Though we are not in the same sense the people of God, that the seed of Abraham were, yet we are in a very appropriate and important sense, a religious people.

2. If we have given a just description of a perpetually backsliding people, that character justly belongs to us. Ever since we were planted in this country, we have been gradually, insensibly, and perpetually backsliding from God and the purity of our forefathers. God has not laid all the same restraints upon us that he laid upon his people of old; but he has laid as many, as great, and as endearing restraints upon us, as he ever laid upon them. If his goodness could have restrained us from backsliding, we certainly should have been restrained. He has raised us from a small, poor, impotent people, to a large, rich and powerful nation. He has been better to us, than to any other nation now on the earth. But we have broken over the powerful restraint which his discriminating goodness has laid upon us. If authority could have restrained us, we should have been restrained by his holy and righteous commands, which are clothed with his infinite authority. But we have cast his law behind our backs. If divine corrections could have restrained, we should have been restrained. He has often and severely chastised us with long and bloody wars, and other national calamities. But we have broken over all restraints laid upon us, and persisted in a perpetual course of backsliding.

This will appear from numerous plain, stubborn facts. Do people in general practice that strict family government, and

devout family religion which were once generally practiced in this country? All professors of religion, and many others, once brought up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. They taught them to read the Bible, to call upon God in secret, and to remember their Creator in the days of their youth. They gave them religious instruction, and restrained them from every species of licentiousness. But how few parents and heads of families now daily call their children and household together, to hear the word of God, and join in social worship! They have slidden back by a perpetual and increasing backsliding, in respect to family government and family religion. If we may judge of other places by this, these primary duties, which lie at the foundation of all virtue and piety, have become almost extinct. The Sabbath was once generally sanctified in this country, and scarcely an open Sabbath-breaker was to be seen. What road can you now find entirely free from travellers, visiters, and men of business? They treat the Sabbath as a common day, in defiance to all the laws of God and man. Though there are many individual christians who constantly and devoutly attend public worship, yet what multitudes every where are seldom or never seen in the house of God! They spend the day in slumbering, or idleness, or in secular business, or vain amusements. This is the case in town and country through the United States, and is an awful backsliding from the pure practice of our forefathers. The time was when no one could be found here, that called in question the inspiration of the scriptures, or the precious truths and doctrines of the Bible. But how many now deny the inspiration and divine authority of the Bible, and disbelieve and discard the great and precious truths of the gospel, and use every effort to diffuse errors, and the most corrupt and fatal sentiments through the land! And how many, not only in the higher, but lower ranks of the people, are driven away by the present flood of error and infidelity! It is in the memory of some now living, when cursing and swearing, and every species of profane and impure language were no where to be heard. But how has profaneness now spread every where, among young and old, high and low! This is a low, mean, land-defiling iniquity, and directly tends to dishonor God, and harden the hearts of the profane. Intemperance is another contaminating vice, reducing thousands and millions to poverty, wretchedness, and an untimely death. This is of all vices the most fruitful source of all other natural and moral evils. And if it be not restrained, it will surely ruin the nation. Prodigality is rapidly spreading through the country, and checking the wealth, the peace and prosperity of the nation. Older

and richer nations are surprised at our prodigality in elegant buildings, luxurious living, costly clothing, convivial entertainments, and expensive, fashionable, and corrupting amusements. Prodigality tends to cherish that love to the world, and the things of the world, which alienates the heart from God, sears the conscience, and drowns men in perdition. Look no farther back than fifty years, and you will be astonished at the rapid increase of every species of prodigality among rich and poor, high and low. It has been the folly and fate of all ancient nations to degenerate and become more and more corrupt, until corruption proved their ruin. But if the foregoing observations are just, it can hardly be doubted that no nation has ever been so far and rapidly backsliding, as this young and rising nation. How is the gold become dim, and the most fine gold changed! We have lost, to an alarming degree, that virtue and piety which was once our glory, strength and security; and seem determined to break over all restraints, and destroy ourselves.

3. It appears from what has been said, that our national sins are very great and aggravated. They are of the nature of backsliding, which greatly enhances their criminality. Backsliding is not a sin of ignorance, but a sin of knowledge. It is sinning against great light, and breaking over the strong restraints of divine goodness, divine authority, and divine justice; which are the most aggravating circumstances of disobedience and rebellion. It was the perpetual backsliding of the children of Israel, that rendered their national sins so extremely heinous in the sight of God. He speaks of it as something strange and unaccountable, that they should be so ungrateful and perverse, as to backslide and break over the strong restraints he had laid upon them to preserve them from such high-handed wickedness. "Why is this people of Jerusalem slidden back by a perpetual backsliding?" Jerusalem was the place where the temple stood, in which God visibly resided, and in which his commands were deposited, explained and inculcated. They seemed to be too well instructed and restrained, to be guilty of backsliding from God, and forsaking his house and worship. God could not account for their extremely criminal conduct on any other ground, but their being deceived and deluded. Now, is it not as strange, as absurd, and as criminal, for the once religious people in this land to backslide from God, forsake his house and worship, break over all restraints, and run into all manner of vice and immorality? The heathen nations round about Jerusalem did not backslide and forsake their false gods and false worship; but the people of Jerusalem did perpetually backslide and forsake the only true God, and the only true religion. The

heathen nations round about the christian nations, do not now backslide and forsake their false gods and false worship; but the christian nations in Europe and America are perpetually forsaking their only living and true God, and his pure and holy worship, and running into greater vices, and errors, and delusions, than their heathen neighbors, and contracting far heavier loads of guilt than the most ignorant and basest savages on earth. And among all christians, we have undoubtedly sunk the fastest and deepest in moral degeneracy and corruption, and contracted the heaviest load of guilt. Our national vices, immoralities, and errors, have been committed against greater light and stronger restraints, than those of any other nation. Infidelity, heresy, profaneness, intemperance, prodigality, and dissipation, in this country, mark a degeneracy, and a backsliding vastly more aggravated, than the same national sins in any other part of the world. Though we are the youngest, yet we are the guiltiest of all nations. God may justly say of us, as he did of his own perpetually backsliding people. "Ah, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil-doers, children that are corrupters! they have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it, but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores; they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment." Though this be our national character and condition, yet we hold fast deceit, and choose to be deluded.

4. It appears from what has been said, that no external means nor motives will reform a backsliding people. They backslide so gradually and insensibly, and are so fond of their backslidings, and are under such a powerful influence of the great deceiver, that they will hold fast deceit, and refuse to repent, return and reform. Their perpetual backsliding is perpetually stupifying their hearts and consciences; for they feel no guilt and fear no danger. They have been in the habit of breaking over one restraint after another, and it continually becomes easier and easier to resist all means and motives to repentance and reformation. The swearer, the sabbath-breaker, the tippler, the worldling, the scoffer, the infidel, laughs at the shaking of the spear, the sword of the spirit, and all means and motives that can be used with him to bring him to repentance and reformation. The experiment has been tried, and failed of success. God tried the power of external means to reform his backsliding people, but they were ineffectual and vain. For this obstinacy God bitterly complains of them in the chapter but one before our text. "They are all grievous revolters, they are brass and iron, they are all corrupters. The

bellows are burned, the lead is consumed of the fire, the founder melteth in vain; for the wicked are not plucked away. Reprobate silver shall men call them, because the Lord hath rejected them." There never were greater means and exertions used to reform the backsliding people in America than have been, and are using at this day. But still iniquity abounds, and the love of many is waxing cold. "We know," by unhappy experience, "that in these last days perilous times are come. For men have become lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemous, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God. These evil men and seducers are waxing worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived;" notwithstanding all means and motives that have been, and are still employed to arrest them in their backslidings, and bring them to repentance. They are certainly out of the reach of men and means to save them from ruin. Hence,

5. This people have abundant occasion for fasting, humiliation and prayer on this annual solemnity. Their situation is extremely critical and dangerous, and every way adapted to affect every benevolent heart. The perpetual backslidings of Israel deeply affected the pious heart of the prophet. In the next chapter to our text he cries, "O that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people." All the friends of God have reason this day to lie low before God, and lament their own backslidings, and bewail the great and general backslidings of this once eminently religious people. It is the imperious duty of all the Noahs, Jobs and Daniels to arise and plead with God to take his own work into his own hands, and bow the hearts of this people to himself. He is able to do it; for he has the hearts of all men in his hands, and can lay the most hardened and obstinate at the foot of his sovereignty, and make them willing to submit, repent and reform. He has done this once for this people. His ear is not heavy that it cannot hear, nor is his hand shortened that it cannot save. If he means to save this nation, he will reform it. If he means to maintain religion in this place, he will revive it. And is it not time for him now to work, when men make void his laws, and break over all external restraints? He has not said to the seed of Jacob, seek ye me in vain. His friends here, through the State and through the land, have great encouragement to commit themselves to God, and wait for his set time to favor Zion. And prayer is the appointed way to wait upon God. This duty devolves upon his sincere friends. Others have left off praying in this place. Instead of calling upon God, they say unto him, "Depart from us, for we desire not a knowledge of thy ways."

SERMON XXVIII.

SACRED MUSIC.

APRIL 11, 1806.

SPEAKING to yourselves in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs; singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord. — EPHESIANS, v. 19.

THOUGH the art of music and all the other fine arts were first cultivated for the sake of mere amusement, yet God has been pleased to sanctify them to a more noble and pious purpose. When he set up his public worship at Jerusalem, he qualified and selected the most ingenious and skilful artificers, to build the temple, to prepare its furniture, and to perform its sacred psalmody, in the highest style of elegance and grandeur. That magnificent structure displayed all the beauties of architecture; the two cherubim, which overspread the mercy-seat, exhibited all the beauties of sculpture; the breastplate of Aaron, which contained the Urim and Thummin, was a master-piece of engraving; and the sacred songs to be sung, in ascending the steps of the sanctuary, were the perfection of poetry and music. These productions of art were employed in and about the temple, for the important purpose of attaching the people of God to his peculiar worship, and of guarding them against the idolatry of the heathen world. But ever since the middle wall of partition between Jews and Gentiles has been broken down, there is no farther occasion for exterior pomp and splendor in public worship. God now requires nothing more of his people, than to worship him in spirit and in truth, at such places and in such houses, as they judge the most proper and convenient. But poetry and music are so congenial with the spir-

it of true devotion, that these are still retained under the more pure and spiritual dispensation of the gospel. Our Saviour himself joined with his disciples in singing an hymn, at the celebration of that sacred ordinance, which he instituted as a standing memorial of his sufferings and death to the end of time. The apostles followed this example, and sang praises to God on both public and private occasions. And Paul in our text exhorts the christians at Ephesus to glorify God, and gratify their own devotional feelings, by the means of sacred poetry and music. "Speaking to yourselves in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs; singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." This passage of scripture, which gives us the most just and accurate idea of the proper use and design of sacred music, will naturally lead our minds into a train of thoughts altogether suitable to the present occasion.

It is proposed to consider,

I. The design of music in general.

II. The design of sacred music in particular.

III. What is necessary to render sacred music the most useful in religious worship.

I. We are to consider the design of music in general.

Singing is no less natural to mankind than speaking. They are naturally disposed to speak, because they wish to communicate their thoughts, and they are naturally disposed to sing, because they wish to communicate their feelings. Speaking is the natural language of the understanding, and singing is the natural language of the heart. We always use words to express our thoughts, but we do not always use words to express our feelings. These we can clearly and forcibly express by simple sounds. How often do we see this exemplified in the case of little children! Before they are capable of speaking, or even understanding a single word, they can express their joy and sorrow, their love and hatred, and all the variety of their feelings, by merely varying the tones of their voice. This language of the heart grows up with every person, and would be as commonly used as the language of the understanding, were it not restrained by the force of example, or by the sense of propriety. Accordingly we find that music has always been much more in use among those people, who have been left to follow the mere dictates of nature, than among others who have been governed by the customs and manners of civil society. It is natural to every uncultivated nation to have a music peculiar to themselves, which no foreigners can completely understand and make their own. The best English musicians have never been able to transplant the peculiar beauties of the Italian and Scotch music into Britain. This is in a great measure owing

to the intimate connection between poetry and music. All nations, in their infancy, have a poetry calculated to interest the feelings of the heart; and their music, which is adapted to their poetry, is the music of the heart, and not of the ear. Their songs are like the song of Moses at the Red Sea, and their music is like the music of the Israelites on that great and joyful occasion. Both their songs and their music were wholly designed to express their grateful feelings, or to make melody in their hearts. And this should always be the design of singing, which is the proper language of the affections. Every distinct affection of the heart has a distinct tone of the voice,* which is perfectly natural to every person in the world. And when any one sings of his own accord, he always sings to express his feelings. This is plainly suggested in the text. The apostle is not addressing the Ephesians as singers, but as men of piety, who would wish to express their holy love and gratitude to the Author of all their mercies. He supposes, that when they felt such devout affections, they would naturally speak to themselves in psalms, or hymns, or spiritual songs, and make melody in their hearts. And the apostle James seems to convey the same sentiment, when he says, "Is any merry? Let him sing psalms." Let him express his joy in the very way that nature dictates, which is always the voice of melody. But though it be the primary design of singing, to express our own feelings, yet there is another important end to be answered by it, which is, to excite similar feelings in others. Music has a natural tendency to excite the affections of those who hear it, as well as of those who perform it. And public music always has this design in view. In this respect, singing and speaking are exactly similar. We speak, to excite ideas in others, as well as to communicate our ideas to them. So the singer may have it in view, not only to express the various emotions and affections which arise in his own mind, but to raise the same emotions and affections in the minds of others. Still, however, the only proper end of singing in general is, to make melody in the heart. Let us now consider,

II. The design of sacred music in particular.

General music becomes particular, when it is applied to one particular purpose. The first purpose to which mankind naturally apply music, is to cheer and exhilarate their spirits. They are formed for social intercourse, and find a peculiar pleasure in meeting together, from time to time, to relax their minds from the cares and concerns of life, by all the means of self-enjoyment. And festival music is exactly suited to answer

* Note 1.

this agreeable purpose. Solomon tells us, "a feast is made for laughter." This has always been the principal design of feasting. And as it has been the custom of all nations to have festivals, so it has been their general custom to employ music to heighten and increase their festivity and joy. It is well known, that not only the Jews, the Babylonians, and the Grecians, but the most rude and uncivilized nations, have been fond of music at their festival entertainments. As the laughter of fools, on such occasions, is like the crackling of thorns under a pot; so there is a certain kind of music, which is directly calculated to excite vain mirth, and gratify every natural feeling of the human heart. It was such light and airy music that Solomon approved, patronized, and employed in the days of his folly. And it is such music, that is now the most admired and cultivated by the sons of pleasure, who give themselves up to vain amusements and recreations.

The design of another kind of music is, to inspire men with a spirit of courage, fortitude, and patriotism. This is the music of the army. The Jews and other ancient nations always employed martial music to rouse the minds of soldiers, and prepare them for the most fierce and bloody combats. And we know that the natives of this country are extremely fond of their war songs, and always make use of them to keep up a martial spirit in time of peace, and to inflame a martial spirit in time of war. This kind of music is just as lawful and expedient as war itself. And whenever it is proper for any nation to engage in war, it is equally proper that they should employ martial music to inspire their armies with a martial spirit.

But the great design of sacred music is, to awaken and express every holy affection of the heart towards God. He is the only object to be glorified and praised by sacred music. So the apostle plainly declares in the text. He calls upon all christians, "to speak to themselves in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs; singing and making melody in their heart to the Lord." As it is the sole purpose of sacred music to express the pious feelings of the heart, so there is no gracious affection but what may be properly expressed by singing. There is a proper sound or tone of voice to express holy admiration, holy submission, holy fear, holy love, holy joy, holy gratitude, holy hope, and holy sorrow. And whenever christians are in the sensible exercise of these affections towards God, they feel disposed to speak to themselves in psalms, or hymns, or spiritual songs, by actually singing in their own way. President Edwards, in giving an account of himself after his conversion, says, "My mind was greatly fixed on divine things.

I was almost perpetually in the contemplation of them; spent most of my time in thinking of divine things, year after year; and used to spend abundance of my time in walking alone in the woods and solitary places for meditation, soliloquy, prayer, and converse with God: and it was always my manner, at such times, to sing forth my contemplations." This is a beautiful illustration of the sacred design of sacred music, which is to express our devout affections towards God, and make melody in the heart to the Lord.

It now remains,

III. To inquire what is necessary to render sacred music the most useful in religious worship, or how it should be composed and performed, in order to produce the greatest and best effect upon the human heart. Here the end naturally suggests the proper means to attain it, and leads me to observe,

1. That sacred music should be constructed with great simplicity.

Much art and ingenuity may be displayed in the composition of complex music; but while this art and ingenuity gain the attention and please the understanding and imagination, the heart is left cold and unaffected. Whatever is addressed to one power or faculty of the mind, will not, for that very reason, affect another. That music which is calculated to call the intellectual powers into lively exercise has no tendency to move the affections. Since music has been reduced to an art, the composers have often discovered more ingenuity than judgment, by constructing it in such a complex manner, as serves to excite curiosity rather than devotion. It is simplicity of composition, which gives music, as well as poetry, the most easy and direct passage to the heart.* This will account for the extraordinary effects of music in ancient times. In those early days, music was composed with that perfect simplicity, which could not fail of raising the affections to the highest pitch of sensibility and tenderness. Modern music is too complex to make such noble impressions upon the human mind. When we hear this kind of music, we are pleased with the art of the composer, and surprised with the various sounds and sudden transitions of the voice; while at the same time this admiration either prevents or destroys the more sublime and tender emotions of the heart. But when we hear plain, simple music, it awakens all our sensibilities, instead of exciting our curiosity and admiration. "We see no contrivance, admire no execution, but our minds are open and passive to the impression." We judge of the goodness of the music by the impres-

* Note 2.

sion we feel, which is the most infallible criterion of its real excellence.

2. It is highly proper that sacred music should be connected with poetry, in order to promote private and public devotion. Melodious sounds have only a mechanical operation on the mind; but when they are united with appropriate language, they produce a moral effect. For this reason, mankind have always connected music and poetry together. It appears that poetry was first devised and composed for the sake of music. Though men never conversed in poetry, yet their first premeditated compositions were poetical. The time was, when tradition supplied the place of history. This tradition was handed down from one generation to another by poets, who composed memoirs of past transactions and events in metre, and set them to music, to be sung at stated anniversaries, or on other public occasions. This practice continued until the time of Moses, when alphabetical writing was first revealed to mankind. Afterwards histories began to be written, and superseded, in a great measure, the use of poetical narratives. But the connection between music and poetry was still preserved. The Israelites, at the overthrow of Pharaoh, sang the praises of God in the most beautiful and sublime poetry. And when they had arrived at Judea, God commanded them to sing his praise in those sacred psalms, which were composed under the influence of a divine inspiration. Nor has the New Testament dissolved the sacred connection between music and poetry. The apostle directs christians not only to sing, but to sing in psalms, or hymns, or spiritual songs. This is always proper in devotional music, which has immediate reference to God, who is the only proper object of religious worship. How absurd would it be, for instance, to celebrate the birth-day of Washington by mere music, without any ode or hymn adapted to the occasion! And how much more absurd would it be to celebrate the character, the works, and the ways of God, by mere music, without using any psalm or spiritual song, to bring those great and glorious objects into view! There can be no religious affection without the perception of some religious object. Some part of the divine character or the divine conduct must be seen, in order to exercise any right affection towards God. And since it is the sole design of sacred music to excite or express devout and holy affections towards the Divine Being, it should always be connected with some significant and appropriate language, either in prose or poetry.

3. Sacred music should not only be connected with words, but adapted to their sense, rather than to their sound. When music is adapted to the mere sound of words, it can serve no other purpose than to please the ear; but when it is adapted

to the proper meaning* of a psalm or hymn, it not only pleases the ear, but affects the heart. It is here, that both composers and performers of sacred music are most apt to fail. How often do composers appear to pay more regard to the sound than to the sense of the words which they set to music! And how often do performers make choice of festival, instead of sacred music, in singing psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, on the Sabbath! All music, which is employed in religious worship, should be truly serious, because religion is a serious matter. It consists in a realizing sense of the being and perfections of God, and in exercising right affections towards him. It becomes every intelligent creature to feel solemn, while contemplating and worshipping the supreme Majesty of heaven and earth. Even to rejoice in God is something very different from rejoicing in the world. There is always a levity in worldly joy; but there is not the least levity in religious joy. Religious joy resembles the joy of heaven, which is no less solemn than sincere. Hence religious joy as well as every other religious affection, ought to be expressed, not by festival, but by sacred music, or a music congenial with those pious affections, which are excited by psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs. In a word, sacred music ought to be adapted to the great design of sacred poetry, which is to destroy levity, and promote solemnity and devotion, in private and public worship.

4. Sacred music can never produce its best effect unless it be performed with true sincerity. There ought to be a perfect concord between the music, the words and the heart. It is a just observation, that no man can speak well, unless he feels what he says; and it is equally true, that no man can sing well, unless he feels what he sings. The highest graces of music flow from the feelings of the heart. Those who sing the praises of God, must possess truly sublime, solemn, tender feelings, in order to fill the minds of a religious assembly with similar emotions and affections. Besides, we are to consider the performance of sacred music, as an act of the highest homage to God. So the apostle recommends it to christians in the text. "Singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." He requires those who worship him, to worship him in spirit and in truth. Accordingly the apostle Paul resolved, that he would not only pray with the spirit, but also sing with the spirit. And all who are capable of singing with the understanding are under peculiar obligations to sing with the spirit and make melody in their hearts to the Lord. He looketh on the heart, and not on the voice, or any outward appearance. He cannot be

* Note 3.

deceived, and he will not be mocked, with a solemn sound upon a thoughtless tongue.

This subject teaches us in the first place, that sacred music ought to be entirely vocal. In the early ages of the world there was no such thing as instrumental music. It was after music was reduced to an art that instrumental and vocal music were united. And it is readily conceded that this union is really necessary to carry festival and martial music to the highest degree of perfection. It is the ultimate design of these sorts of music to gratify the ear, please the imagination, and exhilarate the spirits. And musical instruments of all kinds are calculated to produce these agreeable effects. But it is the proper and professed design of sacred music to raise the heart to God, and fill the soul with a holy and rational devotion. This pious purpose instrumental music has a much greater tendency to obstruct than to promote. For it appears from what has been said that sacred music ought to be always connected with words, and adapted to their proper meaning; but so far as instrumental music is heard, just so far it hurts instead of helping the sense of sacred music, and if carried to a certain degree, entirely destroys it. And when the sense of sacred music is destroyed, it is no longer a devotional exercise, but a mere diversion or festival entertainment. It is granted that instrumental music may increase the melody and harmony of sacred music as well as of any other; and were these the only or principal things to be regarded in sacred music, instruments might be admitted into the church. But mere melody and harmony are not the only nor principal things to be regarded in sacred music, and therefore these things ought to be sacrificed to the great and ultimate design of sacred music, which is to affect the heart in the view of the glory and majesty of God.

But here some may be ready to ask, why were musical instruments once used in the public worship of God by his own appointment; and why is it not as proper and lawful to use them for the same purpose under the gospel, as under the law?

To this it may be sufficient to reply, that God appointed instrumental music in the temple service for the same reason that he directed the temple to be decorated with the richest ornaments, the high priests to be arrayed in the most beautiful and costly robes, and all the sacred utensils to be made of solid silver and gold. This magnificence of the temple and all its appendages, was necessary to render it a proper type of Christ, and an effectual bulwark against idolatry. But now Christ has come in the flesh, and taken the Gentiles as well as the Jews into his spiritual kingdom, there is no longer any occasion for instrumental music, nor any other external pomp and parade in public worship. The instruments of music used in

the temple service were all appointed by God, and separated from a profane to a sacred purpose. And since we have no such musical instruments of divine appointment under the gospel, what right have we to appoint any, or to use any without a divine appointment? All musical instruments which are now used in our churches, except the organ, are employed in festival and martial music, and naturally suggest festival and martial ideas, which ought to have no place in the minds of those who are engaged in religious worship. In the time of David the particular species and particular number of musical instruments to be employed in the temple service were determined by divine authority. But if we once introduce musical instruments into divine service we shall never know when nor where to stop. This difficulty has already occurred in some cases, and will continue and increase as long as the unscriptural practice finds advocates among those who direct and lead in church music. And since there is no precept of Christ, no example of the apostles, no dictate of reason, and no sentiment of piety, which requires the introduction of musical instruments into divine worship under the gospel, it is devoutly to be wished that they might be entirely and universally excluded from the house of God.

It appears, in the second place, from what has been said, that it is much more difficult to compose good music, than many imagine. None can excel in this profound science, without a thorough knowledge of the proper design of music, of the various modulations of the human voice, and of the various emotions and affections of the human heart. As very few have possessed the knowledge of these things, so very few have succeeded in writing music.* More good composers, however, have appeared in the course of the last century, than in any former age. "In the year 1732, George Frederick Handel introduced the sacred musical drama into Great Britain. This wonderful genius had come from Germany to England about twenty years before, and by his zeal, and the incomparable excellence of his compositions, formed a grand era in music." In consequence of this, music in general, and especially sacred music, has been better understood, better composed, and better performed in Britain, of late years, than it ever was before. Some of the best British and other European publications have reached America, and had a happy influence upon those who have been capable of discerning and imitating the beauties of their no less simple than solemn and sublime music. It is to be regretted, that so many among us undertake to write church music, who cannot distinguish it from any other kind, and who

* Note 4.

compose so many light and airy tunes, which are much better calculated for the theatre, than for the house of God. If such novices would consult European authors, and become acquainted with their peculiar excellences, they would cease to admire and publish their own compositions. This censure, however, is not meant to be universal, for it is readily acknowledged, that there are some musicians of great merit in this and the other States, who are using very laudable exertions to reform the gross corruptions which have long been creeping into church music. And if they will only persevere in their united efforts, there is ground to hope that they will happily succeed in forming the taste, and assisting the devotion of all our religious societies.

Finally, the whole tenor of this discourse applies to the present occasion, and urges the duty of discouraging bad,* and of promoting good music. All music, whether good or bad, never fails to affect the heart, and all the finer feelings of human nature. There is now a great attention paid to the theory and practice of music, and if this attention could be properly directed and encouraged, it would have a happy influence upon the political, as well as moral and religious interests of our rising nation. It has been found by the experience of ages, that the prevailing music in any country, will either promote the peace and harmony, the virtue and piety, of its inhabitants, or rob them of these fruitful sources of private and public happiness. Bad music has already done much injury to the cause of virtue and religion among us, by banishing solemnity from our religious assemblies, and introducing such levity as directly tends to destroy devotion, and defeat the design of religious instruction. It is in the power of ill-composed, ill-adapted, and ill-performed music, at the close of divine service, to eradicate from the minds of the people the best impressions of the most instructive and most solemn discourses. Such serious and growing evils† call for some effectual remedy, and the promotion of good music is the only effectual remedy that can be applied. This is an object of sufficient magnitude to merit the attention of the most respectable characters, whose countenance and exertions are necessary to bring about a reformation in music. And here they may find a noble example in the conduct of the British nation. "The year 1784 was rendered a memorable era in the annals of music, by the splendid and magnificent manner in which the birth and genius of HANDEL were celebrated in Westminster Abbey, under the immediate auspices of the king and queen of Great Britain, and the other most dignified personages of the kingdom." It well becomes

* Note 5. † Note 6.

men of science, property, and influence, to patronize the best composers and the best performers of music, and to assist them by all proper means in their power, to bring their extensively useful art to a greater state of perfection. But there is a higher obligation lying upon ministers, churches, and religious societies, to exclude all light, vain festival music from the public worship of God, and to introduce a more sacred psalmody, which is adapted to enkindle and diffuse a spirit of true devotion through a whole religious assembly. And to come nearer home, I would seriously and earnestly exhort the people in this place to unite their influence and exertions in favor of the best kind of sacred music. This is a duty which the glory of God, the interests of religion, and your own spiritual benefit, lay you under indispensable obligations to perform. And should you faithfully discharge this duty, there is a fair prospect that the happy effects of it will continue and increase from generation to generation. But I would be more particular still, and entreat those individuals whom God has distinguished with a musical ear and a musical voice, to improve the precious opportunity which they now enjoy, of cultivating these talents for the service of their Maker. He has been pleased to favor you with a very able instructer;* and it now lies with you, whether you will bury your peculiar talents, and lose your past labor, or employ your future leisure hours in perfecting your knowledge of sacred music, which is a most noble and useful attainment. In this connection, I wish to impress upon your minds an idea which ought never to be eradicated. "Be not weary in well doing." It has been found by unhappy experience that after young people have learned and practiced sacred music awhile, they have become less and less attentive to it, until they have totally neglected it. I beseech you to retain the places which you now fill from Sabbath to Sabbath, and let no trivial cause deter you from bearing a part in the most delightful exercise of divine worship. Only remember and love your Creator, and sacred music will unite your hearts as well as your voices, and make you steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the high praises of God. Piety, poetry, and music, are intimately and happily united. And whenever you feel what you ought always to feel, the spirit of the gospel, it will afford you a peculiar pleasure "to speak to yourselves in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs; singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." You will then go on your way rejoicing, and be continually preparing to join the general assembly and church of the first-born in heaven, in singing the song of Moses and of the Lamb for ever and ever. Amen.

* Mr. Uri K. Hill.

NOTES.

NOTE I.

Nature, independent of custom, has connected certain sounds with certain feelings of the mind.*

NOTE II.

The ear may be transiently pleased with the air of a song, but that is the most trifling effect of music. Simplicity in melody is very necessary in all music intended to reach the *heart*, or even greatly to delight the *ear*. The effect must be produced instantaneously, or not at all. The subject must therefore be *simple*, and easily traced, and not a single note or grace should be admitted, but what has a view to the proposed end. The artifice of fugues in vocal music seems in a peculiar manner ill-adapted to affect the passions.†

NOTE III.

A composer should make his music expressive of the sentiment, and never have reference to any particular word used in conveying that sentiment, which is a common practice, and really a miserable species of punning.‡

NOTE IV.

The influence of music over the mind is perhaps greater than any of the fine arts. It is capable of raising and soothing every passion and emotion of the soul. Yet the real effects produced by it are inconsiderable. This is entirely owing to its being in the hands of practical musicians, and not under the direction of taste and philosophy. For in order to give music any extensive influence over the mind, the composer and performer must understand well the human heart, the various associations of the passions, and the natural transitions from one to another, so as to enable him to command them in consequence of his skill in musical expression.§

NOTE V.

We have another instance of the little regard paid to the *ultimate end* of music, *the affecting the heart and the passions*, in the universally allowed practice of making a long flourish at the close of a song, and sometimes at other periods of it. In this the performer is left at liberty to show the utmost compass of his throat

* Gregory's Comparative View, p. 114.
† Ib. p. 129, 130, 141
‡ Ib. p. 155.
§ Ib. p. 111.

and execution; and all that is required, is, that he should conclude in the proper key: the performer accordingly takes this opportunity of showing the audience the extent of his abilities, by the most fantastical and unmeaning extravagance of execution. The disgust which this gives to some, and the surprise which it excites in all the audience, *breaks the tide of passion* in the soul, and *destroys all the effect* which the composer has been laboring to produce. The principles of taste in music, like those of the other fine arts, have their foundation *in nature and common sense;* these principles have been grossly violated by those unworthy hands to whose direction alone this delightful art has been intrusted; and men of sense and genius should not imagine that they want an ear or a musical taste, because they do not relish much of the *modern* music, as in many cases this is rather a proof of the goodness both of the one and the other.*

NOTE VI.

A certain gentleman published in London, in the year 1786, a Tractate on Church Music; being an extract from the reverend and learned Mr. Peirce's Vindication of the Dissenters. The editor of this Tractate obtained and published the following recommendations of it.

Extract of a Letter from the Rev. Dr. Price, dated April, 1786.

"I have read these extracts from the excellent Mr. Peirce's *Vindication of the Dissenters*, with much satisfaction. I cannot but strongly disapprove instrumental music in churches. It is a deviation from the simplicity of christian worship, which has a dangerous tendency, and may terminate in all the fopperies of popery."

Extract of a Letter from the Rev. Dr. Kippis, dated May 5, 1786.

"I have read with attention the Tractate on Church Music, taken from Mr. Peirce's *Vindication of the Dissenters*, and entirely agree in opinion with the ingenious and learned author. The use of instrumental music in christian worship has no foundation in the New Testament, which is the standard of our faith and practice. If once we depart from this standard, there will be no end to innovations. An opening will be laid to the introduction of one superstition after another, till the simplicity and purity of the gospel service are wholly lost. Every thing, therefore, which tends to divert men from a rational inward devotion to external pomp and ceremony, ought to be discouraged as much as possible."

* Gregory's Comparative View, pp. 159, 160, 162, 163.

SERMON XXIX.

SAMUEL.

JANUARY 18, 1824.

And Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him. — 1 Samuel, iii. 19.

Samuel was born of pious parents, who had a tender concern for his spiritual good, and who early lent him to the Lord as long as he lived. God was highly pleased with their conduct, and manifested his approbation by making their child a subject of his special grace, and an instrument of promoting his own glory. It is not easy to determine when God sanctified Samuel; but it seems by the account of his dedication in the tabernacle at Shiloh, that he was then a subject of special grace; for it is said, "he worshipped the Lord there." Whilst he was a youth, and resided with Eli the priest, God endued him with the gift of inspiration, and ordained him a prophet. After this, it is said in our text, "And Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground." The mode of expression here intimates, that God afforded Samuel his constant presence. It is, therefore, the design of the present discourse, to show what was implied in God's being with Samuel. And,

I. This implied, that God preserved his life and health. His mother seemed to have an apprehension, for some reason or other, when she consecrated him to God, that he might be short-lived; for she said, "she lent him to the Lord as long as he liveth." She ardently desired that his life might be protracted, and God gratified her desire. Accordingly it is said, "Samuel grew." While other children died, Samuel lived, and grew in stature and strength. God graciously preserved his life and

health in a dying world, and lengthened out his days to the common period of human life; so that before he left the world he could gratefully say, "I am old and gray headed." Long life is often represented as the natural effect and temporal reward of early piety. "Come ye children," says the Psalmist, "hearken unto me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord. What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days? Let him depart from evil, and do good: seek peace and pursue it." Divine wisdom says, "By me thy days shall be multiplied, and the years of thy life increased." Again we are told, "The fear of the Lord prolongeth days, but the years of the wicked shall be shortened." It was in mercy to Samuel, and a reward of his early piety, that God preserved him from diseases and dangers, and carried him in the arms of his providence, even to old age. God watched over him every day and every where, and kept him as in the hollow of his hand, and as the apple of his eye, from the arrows of death. With long life he satisfied him, and showed him his salvation.

II. God's being with him implied, that he preserved him from moral, as well as natural evil. He lived in an evil day, when there was no king in Israel, and every one did that which was right in his own eyes, without any legal restraint. At such a day, iniquity abounded, and the love of many waxed cold. All orders and ages of men had grown corrupt, and every kind of error, delusion and vice prevailed. Samuel therefore was greatly exposed to be carried away by the torrent of moral corruption, and nothing but the presence of God could preserve him from being overwhelmed and destroyed. But God was with him and he with God; for he lived as seeing him who is invisible. A love to God, and a sense of his constant presence, made him hate and avoid every sinful course. The happiness he enjoyed in walking with God and contemplating his character, his ways, his word and works, weaned him from the world, and made him look down with disdain and aversion upon those lying vanities, which engrossed the attention and pursuit of the vain and irreligious. He committed the keeping of his soul to God, who would not suffer him to be tempted above what he was able to bear, but with every temptation made a way for his escape. It is remarkable that we do not read that he ever went astray, but, through the whole course of his long life, kept himself unspotted from the world, and uncorrupted amidst a corrupt and degenerate people. This was certainly owing to God's being with him, and restraining the native depravity of his heart. It is easy for God to keep the heart of those who constantly lean upon him, from every evil affection, and guard them against all the fiery darts of Satan,

and all the frowns and flatteries of the world. And as Samuel loved him and he loved Samuel, so he constantly afforded him the restraining influence of his spirit, which effectually secured him from all the ensnaring objects with which he was surrounded.

III. God's being with Samuel implied his constant guidance in the path of duty. Though he was well educated; though he resided with Eli, the priest; though he had the sacred oracles in his hands; yet he still needed the presence and direction of God, that he might know, under all circumstances, what was that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God, which he ought to follow. Though he had a heart to obey God, still he stood in need of a divine influence, to discover what he would have him to do in many doubtful and difficult cases. Notwithstanding his general knowledge of the scriptures, innumerable instances occurred, in which he might have mistaken his duty, unless God had governed his views and determined his determinations. "The way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." This Samuel realized, and therefore acknowledged God in all his ways, that he might direct his paths. Accordingly we find that God did from time to time, direct him in duty. He directed him to bear his solemn messages to Eli and his house. He directed him to comply with the voice of the people, and anoint Saul to be king over Israel. And he directed him, at the hazard of his life, to anoint David, the son of Jesse, to succeed Saul on the throne which he then claimed and possessed. Besides directing him in extraordinary cases, whither to go, what to do, and what to say, he directed him in all his common and daily conduct. He never left him to lean to his own understanding, and to trust in his own heart; but guided him in the strait and narrow path in which he ought to go. In this sense, God was with him in childhood, in youth, and through the whole course of his life. He never forsook him, nor withdrew his directing influence from him, from the time he sanctified his heart, till he had conducted him to the close of life. And to this it was owing that he so seldom, if ever, departed from the path of duty.

IV. God's being with Samuel implied, that he afforded him assistance in the discharge of duty. "The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the Lord." No man is sufficient of himself to think any thing as of himself, but all his sufficiency is of God. "It is God which worketh in men both to will and to do, of his good pleasure." Samuel was constantly dependent on God to enable him to do his duty, after he was led to the knowledge of it. He was called to many arduous and self-denying duties, which he

would have neglected to perform, if God had not inspired him with courage, resolution, and zeal. He was at first afraid to deliver the divine messages to Eli. It was a dangerous duty to anoint David king over Israel, while Saul his enemy was on the throne. In the administration of justice, he had to set his face as a flint, and shake his hand from the holding of bribes. In a word, through the whole course of his life, he stood in need of the divine assistance in the discharge of duty. But when he was weak, then was he strong; strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. God was always at his right hand, that he should not be moved. When he was called to extraordinary duties, God gave him extraordinary strength. While God was near to him, he felt near to God, which filled him with resolution and fortitude in his service. He felt as though he could do all things through divine assistance, and his confidence was well founded. While God was with him, he had omnipotence on his side, which could enable him to surmount every obstacle that occurred in the path of duty.

V. God's being with Samuel implied that he succeeded, as well as guided and assisted, him in duty. Men may form wise and good designs, and pursue them with activity and diligence, but without success. In all their undertakings, it depends upon God whether they shall obtain the object of their wishes. It is in the power of God to disconcert the best concerted designs, and it is in his power to render them successful. Samuel laid out himself in the service of God, and exerted himself greatly to promote the good of the nation. And we have no account of his ever failing of accomplishing his wise and benevolent purposes. This must be ascribed to God's being with him, and sending him prosperity. He formed his designs under the divine direction, and under a sense of his absolute dependence on divine aid, and with unreserved submission to the divine disposal; which was the most proper and infallible way of obtaining the divine blessing on all his exertions. He followed the voice of God in his providence, and the blessings of his providence followed him. As his designs were all of a benevolent nature, so God was pleased to fulfil his promise, and "command his blessing upon every thing he set his hand to." He committed his works unto the Lord, and his thoughts were established. This idea is plainly suggested in the words following the text. "And Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground." God meant to make it appear that he was with him, by fulfilling his predictions, and prospering him in all his pious and laudable pursuits. Such prosperity was a visible token of God's being with him and approving of his character and con-

duct. And this divine approbation highly recommended him to the affection, esteem and confidence of the public. Accordingly it is said, "The people feared the Lord and Samuel." They believed that the Lord was with him in whatever he said and did. This leads me to observe,

VI. That God's being with Samuel implied, that he made him eminently useful in his day and generation. It appears from the whole history of his life, that God did employ him to do a great deal to promote the temporal and spiritual good of mankind. The sacred historians mention Samuel among the most eminent men in the Jewish nation. His life is made an era, from which to date the most important events, and record the most illustrious characters. The writer of the Chronicles of the kings of Israel, speaking of the passover in Josiah's day, says there was no such passover kept since the time of Samuel. And the apostle Peter, speaking of the predictions concerning the incarnation and death of Christ, says, "Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel, and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days." Samuel is also mentioned with Moses, and represented as similar to that illustrious law-giver. God made Samuel uncommonly useful in various ways.

1. By his predictions. He early called him and ordained him a prophet, to reveal his will to his chosen people. We have a particular account of his speaking to him the first time, and ever after that, of his being called and known as a prophet in Israel. For God let none of his words fall to the ground, but fulfilled his predictions at the time specified; which, in connection with the miracles he wrought, established his character as a true prophet. It does not appear that there was any other prophet in the nation, until near the close of his life. God made him his only ambassador extraordinary, to deliver his special messages to his people in particular, and to the world in general. In this second character he was extensively useful. He promoted the good of the nation in his day, and the good of mankind to future ages. He stood at the head of the prophets, and trained up many after him, to speak in the name of the Lord, and foretell his important designs of providence and grace.

2. God made Samuel useful by his instructions. Though he was not a priest, yet he was an eminent instructer. He was the first that taught the school of the prophets; which was a most excellent institution, and continued in the nation until after the Babylonish captivity, when synagogues were first established and multiplied in the land. But, beside this, he taught the people at large, and restrained them from the gross

practices and errors to which they were exposed, while there was no king nor faithful priests in the nation. We have several accounts of Samuel's calling the nation together, and solemnly warning them of their danger, and admonishing them of their duty. In the twelfth chapter of this first book of Samuel, you will find a solemn address which he made to the people, in which he points out their transgressions, and teaches them how to escape the judgments of Heaven. He says towards the close of it, "I will teach you the good and the right way." Samuel was the principal instrument, in the hand of God, of preserving the people from total apostacy from the true religion. The instructions which he delivered in the name of God who was with him, had a controlling influence upon the people in general. Even Saul and his whole kingdom stood in awe of Samuel, and heard the messages which he brought from God, with peculiar sensibility. And it does not appear that, without Samuel's instructions, the nation could have been kept in tolerable peace and quietness, and preserved from the fatal errors and delusions of the idolatrous nations.

3. God made Samuel very useful, by clothing him with civil authority, and giving him opportunity to administer justice through the land. We read, "Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life. And he went from year to year in circuit to Bethel, and Gilgal, and Mizpeh, and judged Israel in all those places. And his return was to Ramah; for there was his house; and there he judged Israel: and there he built an altar unto the Lord." It appears from this account that Samuel had the principal management of the civil affairs of the whole nation. And we can easily conceive that in this elevated office he had it in his power to do great and extensive services in promoting the interest and happiness of not only individuals, but of the whole kingdom. And it appears that things went well while he held the reins of government. He maintained order, peace, and harmony, among all classes of men; and preserved them from anarchy and confusion, which had spread among them under the former judges that had been providentially raised up from time to time, and taken the supreme management of public affairs into their hands.

4. God gave Samuel the spirit of grace and supplication, by which he enabled him to draw down national blessings, and avert national calamities. David mentions the efficacy of Samuel's prayers, as an example to the people of God in the days of darkness and distress. "Exalt ye the Lord our God, and worship at his footstool: for he is holy. Moses and Aaron among his priests, and Samuel among them that call upon his

name: they called upon the Lord, and he answered them." But Jeremiah gives the most instructive and striking representation of the extraordinary influence and efficacy of Samuel's intercessions for his people. "Then said the Lord unto me, Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my mind could not be toward this people." In the history of Samuel we find repeated instances of his powerful intercessions for Israel, and of God's hearkening to the voice of his supplications. When the Philistines went up to Mizpeh to attack the children of Israel, "they said to Samuel, Cease not to cry unto the Lord our God for us, that he will save us out of the hand of the Philistines. And Samuel cried unto the Lord for Israel; and the Lord heard him." On another occasion, when the people asked for a king, Samuel reproved them; and to give solemnity and energy to his reproof, he wrought a miracle before their eyes, and then prayed for the pardon of their sin. "Now, therefore, said he, stand and see this great thing which the Lord will do before your eyes. Is it not wheat-harvest to-day? I will call unto the Lord, and he shall send thunder and rain; that ye may perceive and see that your wickedness is great, which ye have done in the sight of the Lord in asking you a king. So Samuel called unto the Lord, and the Lord sent thunder and rain that day: and all the people greatly feared the Lord and Samuel. And all the people said unto Samuel, Pray for thy servants, unto the Lord thy God, that we die not." Thus Samuel was not only the teacher and the ruler of Israel, but their preserver from the tokens of God's just displeasure. Through his whole life, his prayers and intercessions for the temporal and spiritual good of the nation were infinitely beneficial. Indeed, these gave efficacy and effect to all his exertions for the public good. Besides,

5. His example crowned and established his character in the view of the nation. He was called to visit all parts of Judea, which gave the people a peculiar opportunity of seeing his holy and exemplary conduct. This constrained them to believe that God was with him, for he carried the visible appearance of living near to God, and of enjoying his gracious presence. They saw the spirit of pure religion acted out in his private as well as public life. And when he made an appeal to their consciences respecting his integrity, fidelity and honesty, they could not resist the conviction of his sincerity. You remember the appeal, and the reply of the people. The pious and virtuous example of public men is in itself a great public benefit, and gives weight and influence to all their public services. God meant to make Samuel eminently and extensively useful through his whole life, in every way in which one man

can be useful in the world; and accordingly afforded him his gracious presence and assistance in every station in which he placed him, and in every duty he called him to discharge in private and in public.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. It appears from the character and conduct of Samuel, that pious and faithful parents may do much to promote the piety and usefulness of their children. The parents of Samuel were both righteous before God, and lived in the practice of family religion and of public worship. Though they lived in Ramah, and the hope of God was then in Shiloh, yet we are told that Elkanah and his family went up out of their city yearly to worship and to sacrifice to the Lord of hosts in Shiloh. Their sacrifice was there accepted, and Hannah's prayer was there heard. She asked, and the Lord gave her Samuel as a blessing to her, to his father, and to the world. This gift of God she sincerely and unreservedly devoted to his service. Accordingly we read, when she had weaned Samuel, she carried him up with her to Shiloh, and presented him to Eli the priest, and said, "For this child I prayed, and the Lord hath given me my petition which I asked of him: therefore also I have lent him to the Lord; as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the Lord." There is good reason to believe that Samuel derived unspeakable benefit from this early pious parental dedication to God. Both his parents were pious, and were undoubtedly united in the consecration of their son to the service of his Maker. They put him out of their own hands, and put him into the hands of God, which was the best thing they could do for him. But as they prayed for him before they dedicated him to the Lord, so they continued to pray for him afterwards. God was pleased with their pious conduct, and approved of their dedication, and heard their prayers, and converted their child, and made him a rich and extensive blessing to them and to the world. All pious parents do in substance the same things for their children that the parents of Samuel did for him. They devote them to God, and lend them to the Lord. They early devote them to God. They early pour into their young and tender minds religious instruction. They watch over their conduct, and restrain them from the vanities of childhood and youth. They teach them to remember their Creator, and to call upon his name. They walk before them in the integrity and uprightness of their hearts, and set them an example of piety and virtue worthy of their imitation. They cease not to pray for them daily, that God may be with them to guide all their steps, and preserve them

from every evil. These great and good things all pious parents do for their children. How thankful then should such children be to their parents! How ready to hearken to their instructions, admonitions and restraints! How obedient to their commands! How fond to please them, and to follow their example! No doubt Samuel felt and conducted in this manner towards his pious and faithful parents; and by his pious and dutiful behavior rewarded them in the best manner he could for all their cares and exertions for his usefulness and happiness in the world. How thankful should many of the children and youth in this place be for their pious parents, who have given them to God; who have taught them to love, and fear, and serve, their Creator; who have watched over them in their young and tender years; who have warned them against every evil and false way; and who have often restrained them from walking in the way of their heart and in the sight of their eyes, in the paths that lead to ruin! But let me ask such children and youth whether they have not been unthankful and disobedient to their godly and faithful parents; and whether they have not drawn tears from their eyes and sighs from their hearts, by their disobedience and ingratitude. These are serious, but are they not seasonable and important questions? And must they not carry conviction of guilt to the consciences of all who have abused the instructions and restraints of pious parents?

2. We learn from the character and life of Samuel the importance of parents being pious. The inspired writer of Samuel's life, not only mentioned the piety of his parents, but minutely and largely traces the great and happy influence which their piety had upon their parental conduct towards their son. He traces the piety, prosperity, and usefulness of Samuel up to the source of parental piety and faithfulness. He plainly intimates that it was primarily and principally owing to the prayers of his parents for him, and their consecration of him to God, that he was with him and made him so pious and useful. We find no other instance in the Bible, which so clearly and beautifully illustrates the vast importance of parental piety, as this of Samuel's parents. Their piety led them to feel and conduct towards him in the best manner; to procure for him the greatest and best of blessings, both in this world and in the world to come. God first committed their child to their care, and they then committed him to his care; and he never ceased to care for him from his birth to his death. Here then we see the peculiar importance of parents being pious. God first gives their children to them, and requires them to give them back to him. But they cannot give them up to him in the way he has appointed, before they give up themselves to

his supreme disposal, which they cannot do in a state of impenitence and unbelief. Parents must become pious before they can perform their first duty to their children. How many young parents are there in this place, who are total strangers to vital piety; who murmur and repine under the government of God; who cast his laws behind their backs; who complain of the terms of salvation; and who say in their hearts that he who made them shall not reign over them! Can such parents sincerely give up their children to God? Can they be willing that God should guide, govern, and dispose of them for ever, when they cannot bear the thought that he should guide, govern, and dispose of themselves for ever? Are they prepared to teach, to guide, and govern their children, whose immortal souls are committed to their care and instruction? So long as they neglect their own souls, it is certain they will neglect the souls of their children. And so long as they neglect their own souls, and the souls of their children, they are laying a foundation for their own and for their children's everlasting ruin. They cannot expect that God will be with them so long as they refuse to give themselves to him; and they cannot expect that God will be with their children, so long as they refuse to devote them to his care, direction, and disposal. Young parents cannot hope for a more convenient season to become religious. Their serious situation calls aloud for serious consideration. They cannot neglect religion any longer, without wronging their own souls and the souls of others. It will be no excuse to them, that family prayer and family government are growing out of fashion, or that so many neglect to make a public profession of religion, and a public dedication of their children to God. It belongs to the heads of every rising family to make Joshua's resolution sincerely and immediately. "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." Is it not better to set a good example, than to set a bad example? Every family must set a good or bad example; and how many families are setting bad examples, by shutting God and religion out of their houses! The present state of young parents and rising families exhibits the most melancholy prospect of religion in this town; which ought to alarm both old and young, saints and sinners.

3. The character and conduct of Samuel show the peculiar obligations of those who have been the subjects of parental dedication and instruction, to make a personal dedication of themselves to the Lord. It appears that soon after the parents of Samuel had given him up to the disposal and service of God, and he became acquainted with what they had done for him, to promote his spiritual and eternal good, he felt his own obligations to consecrate himself to the Lord. After the

inspired writer had said that his mother lent him to the Lord, he immediately subjoins, "And he worshipped the Lord there;" that is, in Shiloh. When he came to understand that his parents had solemnly and publicly given him to the service and disposal of God, he realized that they had devolved a tender and solemn obligation upon him, to give himself away to God in an everlasting covenant, never to be broken or forgotten. A similar obligation lies upon all children who have been devoted to God by their parents, when they come to years of discretion, to remember the God of their fathers to whom they have been dedicated, and to subscribe with their own hands to be the Lord's. They are under stronger obligations than other children are, who have never been devoted to God, to remember their Creator in the days of their youth, and to consecrate themselves to his service as long as they live. They have no time to spare, and no talents to bury, or abuse. Their time, and talents, and lives, have been consecrated to God. They must be extremely criminal, therefore, if they profane what is sacred, and spend their consecrated lives in the service of sin. If Samuel, after he had been lent to the Lord, and devoted to his service, had, like other vain children and youth, cast off fear, restrained prayer, and walked in the ways of his heart, and sight of his eyes, would he not have robbed God, grieved his parents, and been aggravatedly guilty of profaning what was sacred? Would not his mother have addressed him, as the mother of Solomon addressed him, and said, "What, my son? and what the son of my vows?" How could you forget and forsake God, to whom you knew you have been solemnly consecrated? How could you disregard and dishonor your father and mother, who have done all they could to preserve you from all evil, and to make you virtuous, useful, and happy? What reply could Samuel have made to such a tender and solemn reproof? He must have been speechless and self-condemned. How can those children and youth who have been publicly and solemnly devoted to God, now justify themselves, if they neglect all religious duties, if they pursue lying vanities, if they trifle with that name which has been called upon them, if they profane that sanctuary where they were consecrated to their Creator, if they despise, disobey, and dishonor their parents, who have taught them their duty and admonished them of their danger? If there be any such children and youth in this place, they have reason to fear the doom of those who, having been often reproved, and hardened their necks, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.

4. In the view of the character and conduct of Samuel we may see the great importance of early piety. This is generally disbelieved and disregarded by the young. Though many of

them believe that piety is very important some time or other; and though they seriously intend to be pious before they leave the world; yet they are ready to imagine that there is little harm or danger in neglecting early piety, and even think there are some advantages to be gained by postponing religion to a later, if not to the latest period of life. They hope to enjoy the world better without piety than with it, especially in their early days; and of course they avoid it as an evil. In this opinion, many of the aged, and some of the apparently pious, seem to agree. Parents, who have solemnly devoted their children to God, allow them to spend the morning of life in vanity, as a privilege they ought to enjoy, without disapprobation, or restraint. But Elkanah and Hannah did not think so. Zacharias and Elisabeth did not think so. Mary the mother of Jesus did not think so. Parents ought not to think so. Children ought not to think so. It is an unscriptural and dangerous opinion. Early piety was of infinite importance to Samuel. It secured the gracious, constant and powerful presence of God, which laid the foundation for all his happiness and all his usefulness in life. God guided him in every step he took, guarded him in every danger to which he was exposed, and assisted and succeeded him in every duty he performed, and in every useful design he formed. His early piety had a happy and amiable influence upon him in his childhood, youth, and every period of life. Accordingly we read, "And the child Samuel grew, and was in favor both with the Lord, and also with men." He advanced in piety and usefulness, as he advanced in age, from the beginning to the end of his life. It does not appear from any thing recorded of him, that he ever slackened his progress in duty and usefulness, but spent all his days in promoting the knowledge of God, the interests of religion and learning, and the prosperity of the nation. And in this pious course, he found the greatest peace and self-enjoyment in life, and the happiest prospects in death. Such has always been the happy tendency of early piety. It was early piety, that prepared Moses, Caleb and Joshua, David, Solomon and Daniel, for the great good they did in the world. And it has the same tendency to produce the same great and good effects at this day. How much more good may be done and enjoyed, by those who become pious early in life, than by those who become pious late in life. It is the highest interest and indispensable duty of the youth, to give their hearts and lives to God. This would secure his favor and presence, and the favor and esteem of mankind. This would prepare them for living and dying, and the enjoyment of all good for ever. "O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!"

5. We learn from what has been said, that it is very criminal to obstruct early piety. It is certainly a truth, that the young do meet with many difficulties and obstructions and discouragements, to hinder them from early becoming pious, besides the native corruption of their hearts. They see not a few on the stage of life, who are highly esteemed and respected, though they make no profession, nor exhibit any appearance of real piety; which leads them to imagine that it is not of so much importance as some say. They see those of their age careless and stupid about serving God and doing good, and they naturally conclude that it is as right and safe for them, as for others, to live so. Besides these, there are ringleaders in vanity and vice, who solicit them to banish all serious thoughts from their minds, and run with them in the paths of the destroyer. The proposal gratifies the depravity of their hearts, and disarms them of all the good resolutions they have sometimes made. But greater difficulties are often thrown in their way by negligent, or unfaithful, or irreligious parents. Some parents wholly neglect a religious care of their children, some are far from being faithful to those whom they have publicly devoted to God, and some practically teach their children to be profane and irreligious. But whether the young or old, whether parents or others, obstruct early piety, they do a great injury to the young, to the world, and to themselves. They promote that which lays a foundation for the greatest evils in this world, and for the personal and eternal ruin of multitudes, who might be useful and happy both in time and eternity; which must eventually give them most painful reflections, whether they themselves are saved or lost. These things, however, cannot excuse the young for neglecting piety. If they meet with these obstructions, they ought to surmount them. Young Samuel did. He gave his heart and life to God, which secured the divine presence, direction, assistance, protection and blessing. And every youth may and ought to do the same. The young are certainly to be pitied at this day. Their situation is peculiarly trying and dangerous. And if each individual does not take care of himself, he has every thing to fear, rather than to hope, from the old as well as from the young.

I would now call upon the young Samuels, if there were any here. But there are none. There are, no doubt, aged Samuels, who early gave up themselves to God, and who have enjoyed and still enjoy the divine presence. Your duty is plain, and your obligations are great, in whatever circumstances you are placed, or in whatever station you move, or whatever relation you bear to the rising generation, to use all the means in your power to lead them in that strait and narrow path in which you are walking to eternal life.

SERMON XXX.

THE BLINDNESS OF A PEOPLE TO THEIR OWN DEGENERACY.

ANNUAL FAST, APRIL 1, 1824.

YEA, gray hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth not. — Hos. vii. 9.

HOSEA prophesied after the twelve tribes became two distinct kingdoms, and having occasion to speak to both, he distinguishes them by calling the one Judah and the other Ephraim. He calls the ten tribes Ephraim, and the other two tribes Judah. In the text, he is speaking of Ephraim, as appears by the verse immediately preceding. "Ephraim he hath mixed himself among the people; Ephraim is a cake not turned. Strangers have devoured his strength, and he knoweth it not; yea, gray hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth not." Gray hairs are a symptom of old age, and old age is a symptom of death. The gray hairs on Ephraim, therefore, denoted his moral degeneracy, or spiritual declension. He is described in this chapter as very immoral, corrupt and profligate, which is that spiritual disorder that leads to ruin. But to give a more alarming view of his danger, it is added, that though he had gray hairs here and there upon him, yet he knew it not. He was so stupid in his degenerate and languishing state, that he took no notice of the visible and mortal symptoms upon him. This is a lively and instructive description of the tribes of Ephraim, while pining away in their iniquities, and insensibly ripening themselves for utter ruin. God undoubtedly recorded the degeneracy and danger of his once pious people, for the

warning and admonition of all other degenerate nations in every part of the world; and it deeply concerns them to hear and fear, that they may escape the danger to which they are exposed.

The text, therefore, plainly teaches this melancholy truth;

When a degenerate people are blind to the marks of their degeneracy, they are in a dangerous condition.

I shall,

I. Consider when a people bear marks of degeneracy.

II. Inquire why they are blind to the marks of their degeneracy. And,

III. Show that their blindness exposes them to peculiar danger.

I. The first thing to be considered is, when a people bear marks of degeneracy.

There may be as plain marks of moral and spiritual disorders, as of natural diseases. Our Saviour blamed the Jews for not understanding the signs of the times, or the marks of religious declension, when they were so ready to discern the signs of the weather. They could and did observe the face of the sky, and they might, with equal ease and certainty, have observed the visible marks of their own religious declension. And what they might have done, any other degenerate people may do, when they bear the marks of spiritual degeneracy. I go on to show when a people do really bear such ominous marks. And here it may be safely said,

1. That a people bear the marks of degeneracy, when they neglect the religious duties which they once practiced. The children of Israel were once a very religious people. So God reminds them by the prophet Isaiah. "Go, and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, Thus saith the Lord, I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown. Israel was holiness unto the Lord, and the first fruits of his increase." This generation continued a holy and virtuous people for a number of years after they arrived in the land of promise. For it is written, that "Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that out-lived Joshua, and which had known all the works of the Lord, that he had done for Israel." But soon after these pious men were laid in their graves, the people began to degenerate more and more. They forsook the house and worship of God, cast his laws behind their backs, and every one did what was right in his own eyes. They profaned the Sabbath, which they once sanctified. They took the name of God in vain, which they once revered. They became formal, insincere, and hypocriti-

cal, and negligent in the religious duties which they once practiced, by which they exhibited visible marks of degeneracy, during the days of the Judges. And they were afterwards, from time to time, in some measure reformed; yet, on the whole, they revolted and degenerated more, until the time of Hosea, when they were covered with gray hairs, the sad marks of religious degeneracy.

2. A people bear the marks of degeneracy, when they dislike, oppose, and reject the plain and important doctrines of true religion, which they once professed to love and believe. A people generally become corrupt in practice, before they become corrupt in principle; though this is not always the case; for corrupt sentiments naturally tend to produce corrupt practice. This was verified in Israel. Their corrupt practice first led them to embrace corrupt principles, and their corrupt principles afterwards led them into the most corrupt and abominable practices. God gave them his holy oracles, which contained all the essential doctrines and duties of true religion, which they solemnly professed to believe and love, and laid themselves under covenant obligations, to pay an universal obedience to all the divine precepts and prohibitions. But they soon became unsteadfast in their covenant, and became as corrupt in sentiment, as they had been in practice. They disbelieved that there was but one only living and true God, and believed that there were gods many, and lords many. Instead of believing that the only true God was the only proper object of religious worship, they believed that the false gods, the graven images, and dumb idols of the heathen, were proper objects of divine worship. Instead of believing that the only true God governed the world, they believed that he had forsaken the earth, and would not do good, neither would he do evil. They renounced the belief of the pure and precious doctrines of true religion, and embraced the absurd doctrines and delusions of the grossest idolaters. By thus renouncing truth for error, and adopting false doctrines for true, they exhibited visible marks of a deep and awful declension. And when any people renounce the great and essential doctrines of the true religion which they once professed to believe and love, and adopt gross and fatal errors, they bear the visible marks of great degeneracy. So they do,

3. When they run into such irreligious and vicious practices, as they once hated and avoided. This was the case of Israel in the days of their declension. They were once virtuous, and hated and shunned all manner of vice and immorality; but when they became backsliders, they fell into every species of vice and dissipation. Hosea says they were guilty of swear-

ing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and the grossest immorality. And Amos represents them as extremely dissipated. He says, they put far away the evil day; that they lay upon beds of ivory, and stretched themselves upon their couches, and ate the lambs out of the flock, and calves out of the midst of the stall; that they chanted to the sound of the viol, and they drank wine in bowls, and were not grieved for the affliction of Joseph. And though the Lord called them to weeping, and to mourning, and to girding with sack-cloth, they persisted in eating flesh, and drinking wine, saying, "let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we shall die." Such a change from piety and virtue, to vice, dissipation and stupidity, was a sad symptom of degeneracy in the people of God. And when any people turn aside from the path of piety and virtue, and run into the paths of vice and dissipation, they declare to the world that they have become extremely degenerate and inconsistent. They practice the evils which they once despised, hated, and avoided.

I must add,

4. It is a mark of degeneracy in a religious people, when they justify themselves and others in the evil courses which they once condemned. While the children of Israel remained pious and virtuous, they disapproved and discountenanced every evil and false way, and condemned in themselves and others every species of vice and irreligion; but when they became degenerate, they justified unholy, unscriptural, and ungodly conduct in themselves and others. Malachi says, "Ye call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, they that tempt God are even delivered." They countenanced, justified and applauded the wicked for that which they once discountenanced and condemned. They were ready to say, "Let no man strive, nor reprove another; for the people are as they that strive with the priest." And God said, "The backsliding Israel hath justified herself more than treacherous Judah." They became so corrupt as to deny the distinction between right and wrong. They called evil good, and good evil; they put darkness for light, and light for darkness; they put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter; which led them to justify the wicked for reward; that is, to gain their approbation and esteem. A people often become very wicked before they presume to justify one another in their wickedness. This is one of the most visible and striking marks of a general and gross degeneracy. It argues that they love that which they once hated; that they approve of that which they once disapproved of; and that they justify that which they once condemned. These are some of the most prominent marks of

moral corruption, which a people bear in the different stages of their degeneracy. Let us next inquire,

II. Why a degenerate people are so blind to the visible marks of their own degeneracy. This is a notorious fact. It was so with declining, backsliding Ephraim. Gray hairs were here and there upon him, yet he knew it not. It was so with the Jews in Christ's day. They thought they were whole and needed not a physician, while they were pining away under a moral and fatal disorder. And it was so with the Laodiceans. They thought they were rich, and increased with goods, and had need of nothing; and knew not that they were wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked, though they were in the lowest stage of religious and moral degeneracy. It seems strange at first view, that any people should be so blind to those things which had such an ominous aspect on their future and eternal interests. What can be the cause or occasion of this blindness, ignorance, and insensibility? Certainly it cannot be owing to the want of visible marks of their degeneracy; for they have gray hairs here and there upon them, which are very visible and plain marks of their moral declension. Nor can it be owing to their want of eyes, or ears, or understanding, or conscience, to discern the symptoms of their degenerate and languishing state. It must be owing to some or other of the following causes.

1. Because they have degenerated gradually. This the metaphor in the text intimates. Gray hairs come on gradually and very insensibly. The first gray hairs are commonly discovered by others, and not by those who have them. They come on gradually, here and there one, and the few first are not for a while discovered at all. Just so a person or people degenerate. They neglect one religious duty, and then another, and another, till they neglect them all. They give up one religious sentiment, and then another, and then another, till they finally renounce the most essential doctrines of the Bible for the false and foolish doctrines of men. They pursue one sinful practice after another, till they throw off all restraint. And they countenance and justify one sinful course after another, and finally put evil for good, and good for evil, till they justify all evil, and condemn all good. All moral declension begins in the heart, and first appears in one form and then in another; first in a lower, and then in a higher degree. And the progress is so gradual, and the transition from one degree of corruption to another is so easy and natural, that neither the persons themselves nor others do hardly perceive it. This is the case with respect to all bad habits or the general course of sinning. The child, the youth, and the man grows profane

gradually. The child, the youth, and the man, grows intemperate gradually. The child, the youth, and the man, becomes a Sabbath-breaker gradually. The professor of religion becomes stupid, formal and negligent, gradually. And what is true in this case respecting individuals, is true in respect to a people; they degenerate so gradually that they do not perceive the marks of declension which are visibly upon them.

2. Moral degeneracy is of a blinding nature. It flows from a corrupt heart, which blinds reason and conscience. The apostle, speaking of those who were under the influence of moral darkness, says, "Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart." The more corrupt and selfish the heart is, the more it blinds the judgment and conscience, with respect to what is right and wrong in ourselves and others. Hence our Saviour says, "The light of the body is the eye; if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness." By the single eye Christ means a pure heart, and by an evil eye a corrupt heart, which fills the mind with moral darkness, and unfits it to judge of moral conduct in ourselves and others. As a mote in the natural eye blinds its sight, so depravity of heart blinds the eye of the understanding and conscience. For this reason Christ asks, "Why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye." Degeneracy of heart always blinds the mind of any person in respect to degeneracy in himself and in others. When iniquity abounds, the love of many waxes cold; so that they do not see their own and one another's moral defects, imperfections, and degeneracy. They are generally, if not universally, carried away by the current of corruption. This was emphatically the case, when Jeroboam the son of Nebat so easily drew off ten of the twelve tribes of Israel, from the house and worship of the God of their fathers, and plunged them into the depths of pagan idolatry. And we have seen in our day a large religious nation, so blind to their own degeneracy, that they involved themselves in fatal errors and delusions. As blindness happened to Israel, so blindness happens to every degenerate people. They grope in the day time as in the night, and know not at what they stumble. Besides,

3. They choose to be blind to their own degeneracy, because

they are loath to see their own criminality. When backsliders in heart review their past degeneracy, they are filled and confounded with their own devices. They are constrained to feel self-reproach and self-condemnation. It gives pain to the idler, to the tavern-haunter, to the swearer, to the Sabbath-breaker, and to the stupid, formal, declining professor, to reflect upon the ways and means by which he has brought himself to his present mean, foolish, criminal degeneracy. And it gives pain to a people, to reflect upon the industry, the sobriety, economy, virtue, and piety of their fathers, from whom they have degenerated. When they have deceived themselves, they cannot bear to undeceive themselves. God ascribed the ignorance of his degenerate people to this cause, their reluctance to knowing the truth respecting themselves. He demands, "Why then is this people of Jerusalem slidden back by a perpetual backsliding? They hold fast deceit, they refuse to return. I hearkened and heard, but they spake not aright: no man repented him of his wickedness, saying, what have I done? every one turned to his course, as the horse rusheth into the battle. Yea, the stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle, and the crane, and the swallow, observe the times of their coming; but my people know not the judgment of the Lord." God says of the degenerate idolater among his people, who has forsaken him, "He feedeth on ashes; a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?" A degenerate person and a degenerate people are always afraid to review their steps of declension, and recollect the light they have resisted, and the obligations they have broken, and the danger to which they have exposed themselves, and this makes them voluntarily blind to their criminal degeneracy. It remains to show,

III. That their voluntary and criminal blindness to their degeneracy exposes them to peculiar danger.

For, in the first place, it prevents them from using the proper means of reformation. Every way of man is right in his own eyes. There is a way that seemeth right to a man, and yet it is the way to death. But so long as a person or people think they are pursuing a right, a safe and innocent course, they will have no thought nor desire of reforming. If they know not that gray hairs are here and there upon them, they will have no apprehension of danger or death, nor consequently use any means or precautions to prevent these evils. God himself says to Ephraim, "They will not frame their doings to turn unto their God." It is the observation of a great politician, that it was never known that any degenerate nation

ever reformed themselves. And if they ever reformed, it must be owing to some foreign superior power. This is as true in respect to religion as in respect to civil government. Hence God says, "O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved: how long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?" That is, how long wilt thou say, I am innocent, and have no need, and will use no means of washing?

But in the second place, the ignorance of a degenerate people not only prevents their using any means to reform themselves, but disposes them to resist all means that are used to reform them. This we find was always the case when external means were used to reform degenerate Israel. Zechariah says, "They refused to hearken, and pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their ears, that they should not hear. Yea, they made their hearts as an adamant stone, lest they should hear the law and the words of the Lord of hosts by the former prophets." God seemed to be discouraged to use any more means to reform them. He puts the solemn question to them, "Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more." And again he says, "Wo unto thee, O Jerusalem! wilt thou not be made clean? when shall it once be?" Will you ever be willing to be made clean? Will you ever cease to oppose and resist all means used to make you clean? When shall it once be? It never will be, for you will always resist. Now if a degenerate people are blind to their degeneracy, and will use no means to reform themselves, but will always resist all means that are used to reform them, are they not in a dangerous state? Have they not reason to fear that God will say, let them alone, and use no more means with them; or let them have precept upon precept, and line upon line, that they may go, and fall backward, and be broken, and destroyed?

IMPROVEMENT.

1. It appears from what has been said, that a people may degenerate in religion, while they are making great progress in other respects. Success in their secular concerns naturally tends to make them worldly-minded. And worldly-mindedness naturally tends to make them more diligent, active, and enterprising, in forming and pursuing a multitude of schemes to amass property, and become great, magnificent, and prodigal. They ardently desire temporal prosperity, and prefer it to religious attainments and growth in grace. Of course, the more they lay up treasures on earth, the less they lay up treasures in heaven. The more their hearts are set upon the world,

the less they are set upon God and divine things. The more their worldly enjoyments increase, the more their religious exercises and enjoyments decrease. Worldly prosperity is often the primary source of degeneracy in piety and virtue. For men cannot serve God and mammon. Supreme love to the world always excludes supreme love to God. If we consult scripture, observation, or experience, we shall find that mankind may degenerate in religion, while they are making great and rapid progress in their secular pursuits. The people of Israel were never in a more prosperous and flourishing state, than they were under the reigns of David and Solomon; and yet they never declined faster in religion, than while that national prosperity continued. For, upon the death of Solomon, they had become so alienated from the character, the perfections, the laws, the worship, the house, and government of God, that they were generally prepared to renounce the purest religion for the grossest idolatry. It was a flood of wealth poured into the church of Rome, that corrupted her principles and practices, and brought on her total apostacy. The growing wealth of Britain has produced a growing degeneracy in religion. And the rapid increase of wealth in America has produced as rapid increase of atheism, deism, heresy, and every species of irreligion, vice, and immorality. As we have increased, so we have sinned. We have lost our once fair, religious character, and become extremely degenerate, while we have become rich and increased with goods. That this is true, we know by observation. We have seen the ways and means of religious declension, and perhaps many of us have felt the effects of it.

2. It appears from what has been said, that it is a favor to a degenerate people, to have the marks of their degeneracy plainly pointed out. For though they are so visible, yet they are willingly blind to them. They do not choose to discover them, and will avoid it, if possible. God says they shut their eyes, lest they should see the disagreeable marks of their degeneracy. He says they shut their ears against the voice that would inform them of the gray hairs that are upon them. He says too, that they harden their hearts, to prevent a conviction of their criminal declension. But the more unwilling they are to see the disagreeable marks of their degeneracy, the more necessary it is that they should be made, if possible, to see them; for without the sight of them God himself cannot reform them. He therefore commanded his prophet of old, to "cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgressions, and the house of Jacob their sins." Whenever God was about to reform his degener-

ate people, he raised up priests and prophets, and sent them for the purpose of pointing out the sad marks of their degeneracy, their guilt, and their danger. It was by means of their warnings, admonitions, and instructions, that he alarmed their fears, awakened their consciences, and brought them to humiliation, repentance, and reformation. It was a great favor to them, that, when they neglected to use any means to reform themselves, God should use the most effectual means to prevent their ruin. And it is as great a favor to a degenerate people, that God now sends his ministers to show them the marks of their declension, the guilt they have contracted, the dangers to which they are exposed, and the means by which they may escape the evils that hang over them. It is the kind intention of this discourse, to produce these salutary effects. I must, therefore, proceed to infer,

3. That this people have gray hairs here and there upon them, which are visible marks of a sad declension in piety and virtue. This subject asks you as a people, not as individuals, whether you have not degenerated in respect to the religious duties which you once practiced. Did you not once very generally and constantly attend the public worship of God in his house? Was there one family, less than fifty years ago, that totally neglected, or generally neglected, public worship? But is there not now more than one; are there not many families, that do not commonly attend public worship? Did you not once very generally, if not universally, maintain family worship in your houses? But is this a general practice here now? Is there not a large proportion of the families in this place, that now constantly neglect this plain and indispensable duty? Yea, are there not some professors of religion who neglect it? Did you not once more generally walk within your houses with a perfect heart, and instruct, and warn, and admonish, and restrain your children and domestics, that they might keep the way of the Lord, remember their Creator in the days of their youth, and avoid all the paths of the destroyer? Did you not once view the great duty of making a public profession of religion of more importance than you do now? And are not many living in the criminal neglect of this duty? Do you believe the peculiar and precious doctrines of the gospel, which you once believed and tenaciously maintained? Is there not here a great degeneracy in religious sentiments? Have not some avowedly renounced the fundamental doctrines of Christianity, and fallen into the most absurd and fatal errors, and become zealots in propagating them. Are there not many more relaxing and declining in their religious opinions, and listening with avidity to more loose, liberal, and equally delusive and danger-

ous doctrines, and waiting for a more convenient season to disclose their inward sentiments? How many are halting between two opinions, in respect to the doctrine of total depravity; the doctrine of divine agency; the doctrine of divine decrees; the doctrine of divine sovereignty; and the necessity of regeneration, or a radical change of heart? Is not moderate Calvinism, or, which is the same thing, moderate Arminianism, creeping in and spreading? In a word, are you not renouncing, or calling in question, the great truths of the gospel, which is an awful declension in religious sentiments? Have you not degenerated as much in practice as in principle? Is the Sabbath as strictly observed as it used to be? Is there not more laboring, more travelling, more visiting, more vain and worldly conversation on the Sabbath than formerly? Has not the practice of reading corrupt books, and following corrupt teachers, become more common and reputable, than it once was? Have not tavern-haunting, gaming, intemperance, prodigality, vain amusements, and every species of dissipation and extravagance, become more common and fashionable? And are not the proper means of preventing, or restraining all the evils which have been mentioned, generally if not universally neglected by those to whom it belongs to use them? Are not, then, gray hairs as thick upon the people here, as they were upon Ephraim, and has not blindness happened to them as well as to him? Hence

4. It appears from what has been said in this discourse, that the people here are in a very dangerous state. Degeneracy in piety and virtue, in principles and practice, is extremely criminal, because it implies a once better state, and consequently a great abuse of moral and religious privileges, opportunities and obligations. The pagan world that lie in wickedness never have enjoyed the means of light, instruction and restraint, that civilized and gospelized people have enjoyed. They never have had line upon line, and precept upon precept, nor heard the instructions, warnings and admonitions, which God has given to those, to whom he has given his word. They have never degenerated under the means of grace and the light of the gospel. Their sins are like the sins of Sodom and Gomorrah, but not like the sins of Chorazin and Bethsaida, where God's mighty works were done. The sins in this land and in this place are like the sins of Chorazin and Bethsaida, for here God's mighty works have been done. Here he has appeared in his glory in building up Zion. Here he has once and again poured out his spirit, and awakened, convinced, and converted sinners, and edified and comforted saints, and enabled many to shine as lights in the midst of a crooked and perverse gener-

ation. Degeneracy here is peculiarly criminal in the sight of God. But though degeneracy be more *criminal* than stupidity; yet stupidity is more *dangerous* than degeneracy. It was stupidity in Ephraim that rendered his state so deplorable. Though he had gray hairs, the sad marks of degeneracy upon him, yet his case would not have been so hopeless and dangerous, if he had not been stupidly blind to them. He perceived them not, and was in no measure alarmed at the approaching death which they threatened. It is the awful stupor of this people in their degeneracy, which is the most alarming circumstance of their sinful and deplorable state. If they were awakened to see their guilt and danger, there would be great ground of hope. God reformed Ephraim from time to time, though sunk in deep degeneracy. The hearts of the most degenerate people are in the hands of God, who can turn them effectually from their evil ways. But when he practically said of Ephraim, let him alone, let him pine away in his iniquities, his case was hopeless. And while God suffers a degenerate people to continue stupid and insensible of their guilt and danger, the mark of reprobation is upon them. And this mark is now visible upon this people. While God has been hearkening and hearing, who has repented him of his wickedness, saying, What have I done? Who has not turned to his course, as the horse rusheth into the battle, fearless of the arrows of death? Hence,

5. Is there not peculiar need of the special divine influence, to revive the languishing state of religion here, in this day of deep declension? The people have been long and rapidly degenerating, notwithstanding all the outward means that have been used, to prevent and restrain degeneracy in principle and practice. Is it not time for God to work, when men make void his law? Is it not time for him to set up a standard, when the enemy is coming in like a flood? It is a proper time for God to take the work of reformation into his own hands, when all means and second causes lose their reforming influence. It is then that God can display his amiable and powerful sovereignty, in pouring out his awakening, convincing, converting, and quickening influences upon a degenerate people, the most visibly and gloriously. Where sin abounds, grace can much more abound. God often revived his own work and promoted his own cause, when the enemies of religion were triumphing, and the friends of it were desponding. God means that his people should realize their dependence on him, and not lean to their own understanding, when they have marks of declension upon them. They can grow rich, and great, and prosperous, and in their own view, happy, without as well as with his gracious

influence; but this is not the case in respect to religion. They cannot repent, reform, and grow in grace, without his gracious presence and influence; love, repentance, faith and growth in grace, are the fruits of his spirit. Paul may plant and Apollos water in vain, if God give not the increase. A degenerate people need to be deeply impressed with a sense of absolute dependence on God, for spiritual, undeserved, and unpromised blessings. Hence,

6. A time of religious declension is a time for all the sincere faithful friends of God to seek unto him for his gracious, renewing, sanctifying and quickening influences. A people seldom become so universally degenerate, as to have no men of genuine piety among them. This was never the case in degenerate Judah and Ephraim. Though Elijah once thought that he was the only true Israelite in the nation, yet he was mistaken; for there were then many other Israelites indeed, who had not bowed the knee to the image of Baal. This was not the case in Christ's day; there were Simeon and others, who were the servants and worshippers of the true God. In the general declension in the churches of Asia, there were individuals who kept the faith, and maintained and adorned their christian profession. This is undoubtedly the case in the most degenerate churches in this land, and in the degenerate church in this place. It is upon these persons this subject loudly calls, to rise and call upon God to work effectually upon the hearts of this people, and bring about a thorough and general reformation. God heareth not sinners. They are the only persons whose prayers he will hear, and has promised to hear. He hath not said to the seed of Jacob, "seek ye me in vain." It was in answer to the prayers of Hezekiah, Josiah, Jehoiada, and other reformers, that God reformed his degenerate people, before he sent them into captivity. And it was owing to the prayers of Daniel, Ezra, and Nehemiah, that he poured out his spirit upon them before and after their return from captivity. The command is, "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem," and the promise is, "They shall prosper that love thee." But you may ask — when is the time to begin to pray more fervently and especially for a reformation in this place? The answer is plain; to-day. It is the very business of this day of humiliation, fasting and prayer, to pray for a reformation here in particular. There are plain and powerful reasons why you should seek unto the Lord to-day, to come and rain down righteousness on this people.

1. The honor of God requires you to do it.
2. The good of souls requires you to do it.
3. Your own vows and engagements require you to do it.

SERMON XXXI.

SUSPENSION AND INFLICTION OF JUDGMENTS.

OCTOBER 3, 1824.

VERILY I say unto you, all these things shall come upon this generation. — MATT. xxiii. 36.

GOD is a being of perfect rectitude, as well as of perfect wisdom; but yet we find some things in his word and providence, which are not easy to reconcile with either his wisdom or rectitude. Of this kind is the passage I have read, which contains a truth and a fact, that are involved in no little obscurity. The connection of the text is this. "Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes; and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city. That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. Verily I say unto you, all these things shall come upon this generation." Luke expresses the same thing in still stronger terms. "That the blood of all the prophets which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation; from the blood of Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, which perished between the altar and the temple: verily I say unto you, it shall be required of this generation." These are Christ's declarations. The question is, how could the blood, that is, the punishment due to all preceding generations, be required of this? If this generation had sinned, they deserved to be punished. If this generation had sinned as much as any former generation had sinned, then they deserved to be pun-

ished as much as any former generation. If this generation had sinned as much as all the former generations put together had sinned, then they deserved to be punished as much as all the former generations put together deserved. This is plain and intelligible; and had this alone been asserted in the text, the passage would have been plain and easy to be understood. But how this generation should deserve to be punished for the sins of any former generations is hard to conceive; and if this generation did not deserve to be punished for the sins of former generations, it is equally hard to conceive why they should be punished for the sins of all former generations. The text, however, seems to imply, that this generation should be actually punished for the sins of all former generations. By this time, perhaps, every one sees there is a difficulty in the text; which it is my present purpose to clear up. And, in order to this, I shall proceed gradually, and lay down several plain and undeniable propositions.

1. It is not right that God should punish one generation for the sins of another. This is next to self-evident; but if it needs any illustration, it may easily be given. We know it is not right that a present generation should be punished for the sins of a future generation. What possible guilt can the present generation derive from a future generation? Suppose God now knows all the sins that the next generation after this shall commit; and suppose he now knows that their sins will be enormously great; and suppose they shall surpass, in number and guilt, the sins of all former generations; can this knowledge of the next generation justify God in punishing us for their sins? How can God justly punish us for the sins of a generation that are gone off from the stage of life, any more than he can justly punish us for the sins of a generation that have not yet come upon the stage of life? Though we have committed as many and as great sins as the generations that are dead and gone; yet their sins are no more our sins, than our sins are their sins; and, by consequence, we no more deserve to be punished for their sins, than they deserved to be punished for our sins before we existed. It is true, we may approve of the sins of a generation that are dead and gone, which are recorded in the Bible; but we cannot approve of the sins of a future generation that we know nothing about. This, however, makes no difference in the case, because our approbation of a former generation's conduct is our sin and not theirs. So that it remains true, that God cannot, in justice, punish one generation for the sins of another.

2. It is just that God should punish all generations for their own sins. All who have sinned deserve to be punished; and

as all generations from Adam to Christ had sinned, so God had a right to punish all generations from Adam to Christ, according to their desert. It belongs to God, as the proprietor and governor of the world, to punish every generation from age to age, for their own sins; and no generation can have the least ground to complain, if God does give them the due reward of their own transgressions. Yet,

3. God might, if he had pleased, passed by the sins of all generations. Though God may punish men for their sins in this life, yet he is not bound in justice to punish them here. This world is designed to be a state of probation, and not a state of rewards and punishments. God has appointed a future day in which to judge, and a future state in which to reward and punish mankind. And he is not obliged to judge any before that day, nor punish any before they enter into that state. Accordingly we find that he has not, in fact, punished either persons or generations according to their deserts, in this world. Some very wicked men have lived and died in peace and prosperity; and some very wicked generations have come upon, and gone off, the stage of life without any signal marks of the divine displeasure. This led Solomon to consider and declare, that "the righteous and the wise, and their works, are in the hand of God: no man knoweth either love or hatred by all that is before them. All things come alike to all: there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked; to the good and to the clean, and to the unclean; to him that sacrificeth, and to him that sacrificeth not: as is the good, so is the sinner; and he that sweareth, as he that feareth an oath." God often passes by the more guilty, and punishes the less guilty sinners in this life. So that we cannot distinguish the greatest from the least sinners by their impunity or punishment in this world. This Christ has assured us by his reply to those "that told him of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices:" "Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, nay; but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. Or those eighteen upon whom the tower of Siloam fell and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you nay: but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." Scripture, reason and universal observation unite to prove, that God might have passed by all past generations with impunity. He has never been bound in point of justice to punish men in this world according to their deserts. He might have spared all generations from Adam to Christ from their deserved punishment. He has a right to wait till the day of judgment before he punishes any

person or generation, according to the full demerit of their sins.

4. It is right that God should punish one generation and not another. If he has a right to punish all generations, or to spare all generations, then he certainly has a right to punish one generation and not another. He has always acted as a Sovereign in sparing, or punishing particular generations. There had been several generations before the Flood, but he continued his patience towards them all, except the last. Though he saw one generation after another becoming more and more corrupt, yet he waited till the last generation, before he involved them in one general ruin. The Egyptians, age after age, continued and increased in every species of iniquity and vile abominations; but God delayed to destroy them, until they had filled up the measure of their sins and provocations, in the days of Moses, when God poured out the vials of his wrath upon them. God treated the seven nations of Canaan in the same manner, and did not destroy them until they had ripened themselves for ruin. That generation of Israel which came out of Egypt, deserved to be destroyed with the Egyptians and Amorites; but yet God waited forty years before he caused them to perish in the wilderness. The ten tribes of Israel were extremely corrupt, when they revolted from God and turned unto idols; but yet he waited many years before he sifted them over the earth as grain is sifted in a sieve. Judah at the same time deserved to be cut off; but God only sent them into a long captivity to reform them, and never ruined them as a nation, until they had crucified and rejected the Lord of glory. Thus God has a right, and has always exercised that right, to punish one generation and not another.

5. When God does spare one generation and punish another, he always has some good reasons for both sparing and punishing. Though he might, in justice, punish every generation, and though he might, in goodness, spare every generation; yet, in wisdom, he may spare one generation, and punish another. He spares, or punishes, in this world, in order to answer some wise and good designs in this probationary state. Sometimes these wise purposes will be best answered by sparing, and sometimes by punishing. It was necessary that Judah should be spared till Shiloh came; and it was necessary that the ten tribes should be cut off before that important event. As God is the governor of the world, it becomes him to make the inhabitants of the earth know that he is the Lord; which he does most effectually by punishing them from time to time, for their iniquities. Accordingly we are told, "The Lord is known by the judgments which he executeth." And he says

himself, that he punished Pharaoh and his kingdom, "that his name might be declared throughout all the earth." It seems to be as proper that he should display his goodness, mercy, and forbearance, as his justice and sovereignty, in the dispensations of his providence. Any signal display of any of the perfections of God, has a direct tendency to awaken the attention of mankind to his absolute supremacy and dominion. Whether he spares, or punishes, therefore, he means to answer some wise and important purpose. All his providential dealings have respect to the designs he is carrying on here in this world. He never spares, nor punishes any generation, without having wise and just motives for his conduct.

6. The sins of one generation may be a good reason why God should punish the sins of another. We have just observed, that he does not punish any generation merely because they deserve to be punished; but because it has become necessary to punish them, in order to answer some wise providential purpose. After he has exercised his patience and forbearance for several generations, it becomes necessary to make his wrath and power known, to check and restrain the prevailing and increasing wickedness of the world. Thus it was before the Flood; God spared the sins of one generation after another, till the earth was filled with violence. The long course of wickedness, which the former generations had lived in, rendered it necessary that the whole world should be thoroughly purged from its universal corruption, by a universal and overwhelming deluge. Though every generation, from Adam to that period, had been degenerating, yet the world had not arrived to such enormous guilt as to prepare them for that awful catastrophe. So that it was not time to destroy the world till then. But all the sins of all the former generations became a reason why God should so severely punish that generation rather than any other, for their own sins. So the Amorites had been preparing themselves for destruction, four hundred years before it came upon them. All the sins of all the generations before the last, served to fill up the measure of their iniquities, which was the reason of God's cutting off the last. The sins of ancestors always come into the account, and form a reason for God's punishing their posterity. God told the Jews, in the second commandment, that this was the rule of his providence. "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and

fourth generation of them that hate me; and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments." Here God assures his people that the sins of foregoing generations would be a reason for his punishing the sins of succeeding generations. He also required his people, when visited with national calamities, to confess not only their own sins, but the sins of their fathers, as the procuring cause of his righteous judgments. This is agreeable to his threatenings in case of disobedience. "If ye will not hearken unto me, and will not do all these commandments, ye shall perish among the heathen, and the land of your enemies shall eat you up. And they that are left of you shall pine away in their iniquity in your enemies' lands; and also in the iniquities of their fathers shall they pine away with them." But yet he immediately promises, "If they shall confess their iniquity, and the iniquity of their fathers," he will remember and save them. Agreeably to this, God mentions the sins of those who had gone before, as a reason for punishing the sins of those who came after. He mentions the sins of Jeroboam as a reason for punishing those whom he had made to sin. He mentions also the sins of Manasseh as a reason for sending Judah into captivity. "Surely at the commandment of the Lord came this upon Judah, to remove them out of his sight, for the sins of Manasseh, according to all that he did; and also for the innocent blood that he shed; (for he filled Jerusalem with innocent blood;) which the Lord would not pardon." And agreeably to this rule of divine providence, good men under the Old Testament, when they confessed their national sins, at the same time confessed the sins of their fathers, of former generations. Nehemiah confessed before God, "Howbeit thou art just in all that is brought upon us: for thou hast done right, but we have done wickedly: Neither have our kings, our princes, our priests, nor our fathers kept thy law, nor hearkened unto thy commandments and thy testimonies, wherewith thou didst testify against them." Daniel made a similar confession before God. "O Lord, to us belongeth confusion of face, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against thee." These good men viewed the sins of former reigns and generations as a reason why God should punish their own generation for their own sins. It clearly appears, from the whole course of divine providence, from the beginning of the world to Christ's day, that God considered the sins of foregoing generations as a good reason for punishing following generations for their own sins. This was such a reason, without which, he would not have required the blood of one generation for that of another. I now add,

7. That this is Christ's meaning in the text: "Verily I say unto you, all these things shall come upon this generation." Or as Luke expresses it, "That the blood of all the prophets which was shed from the foundation of the world may be required of this generation." This generation might have passed with impunity, had not the sins of preceding generations made it necessary for God to pour out the vessels of his wrath upon them. They had so filled up the measure of their father's guilt, by presumptuously crucifying the Lord of glory, and boldly persecuting and slaying his inoffensive and faithful followers, that it was time for God to arise and come out of his place, and destroy his own temple, his own city, and his own incorrigible people. God's having passed by, in a measure at least, the sins of so many generations, from Adam to Christ, was a reason why he should bring such tremendous judgments upon Judea, Jerusalem, and the Jews, as that there had not been the like from the beginning of the world to that time, and never should be the like to the end of time. Josephus tells us that the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans was the most terrible and awful judgment that had ever been brought upon that nation, or upon any other. That generation had imbrued their hands in the blood of Christ, rejected the great salvation which he had provided for them by his sufferings on the cross, and persecuted and slain his holy apostles and sincere followers. Their own sins were extremely great and aggravated, considered separately from the sins of all former generations of mankind; so that on their own account they deserved the severest tokens of the divine wrath. But yet, had not God so long delayed the due punishment of former generations, he might have spared this. God had an eye to all the sins of all the generations of mankind, from Adam to Christ, in determining the time, the circumstances, the degree, and the duration, of the destruction of his city, his temple, and his nation. And in this sense, the blood or punishment of all preceding generations was required of the generation that were personally guilty of the highest act of treason against their God and Saviour, though no person was punished for any sins but his own. This perhaps is a just and full solution of the difficulty in the text.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. It appears from what has been said, that the Jews in Babylon misunderstood or perverted the rule of divine providence in punishing men for their own sins in this life. They complained that he punished them for the sins of others, and not

for their own. They said, "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge." By this they meant to say, God was punishing them for the sins of their fathers, of which they were not guilty, and for which they ought not to be punished. God denies their charge, and declares, "As I live, saith the Lord, ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel. Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die." God had never punished them nor any other persons or people for any sins but their own. It is true, the sins of Manasseh had been the occasion of his sending them into their long captivity in Babylon, for their own sins. He had treated them according to his own declaration or threatening in the second commandment. The sins of Manasseh and of their fathers was the reason why he had punished them for their own sins, at the time and in the place he had done. He had not punished them any more or less than their own sins deserved, though he might have spared them from their present punishment, if the sins of Manasseh and of their fathers had not rendered it proper and necessary to chastise them for their own sins. They either designedly perverted or ignorantly misunderstood the reason why he subjected them to such a great national calamity as they were then suffering.

2. It appears from what has been said, that God never punishes men in a manner contradictory to the precept he has given them, in respect to punishing one another. His precept is in Deuteronomy xxiv. 16. "The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers: every man shall be put to death for his own sin." Now, if what has been said is true, then God did not contradict this precept, in any instance of his conduct recorded in his word. He did not contradict it, when he opened the earth to swallow up Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, with their wives and their sons, and little ones; nor when he destroyed the Amorites; nor when he destroyed the Jews in the siege of Jerusalem; nor when he has destroyed towns and cities by earthquakes, conflagrations, or inundations; nor when he has caused thousands to fall promiscuously on the field of battle. Though, in such cases, some have been less guilty than others, yet they have all deserved to die, at the time, and in the manner, they did die. God is the holy and righteous sovereign of the world, and the supreme arbiter of life and death. As all men have sinned, so all men deserve to die, and it belongs to God to determine the time, the place, and the means, of every one's death. And, in this part of his conduct, he never punishes the father for the son, nor the son for the father, nor one

person for another. He is righteous in all his ways, and in all his providential dealings he acts according to strict and immutable rectitude.

3. It appears from what has been said, that we have no more reason to think that God ever punishes us for Adam's sins, than the Jews had to think that he punished them for their fathers' sins. They had no reason to think that God punished them for their fathers' sins. For they had no evidence of it from scripture, or from providence, or from reason. And we have no evidence from any of these sources, that he punishes us for the sin of Adam. Adam's first offence was undoubtedly the occasion of God's ordering it so that we should all become sinners, and for our own sins become liable to be punished, both in this life and in the life to come. But this is totally different from his punishing us for the sin of Adam. It was an act of his wisdom and sovereignty to establish an infallible connection between the first sin of Adam, and the future sin of all his posterity. It was neither an act of justice nor injustice, for God to suspend our innocent or guilty state upon the innocent or guilty state of Adam. God has done us no injustice in bringing sin into the world through the instrumentality of Adam; and never will do us injustice so long as he never punishes us for any sins but our own. We may cast the blame of our sins upon Adam; but God, who is perfectly just, will cast the blame of our sins upon ourselves. By blaming God or Adam for his first offence, we cannot extenuate but may increase both our guilt and punishment.

4. It appears from what has been said, that it is criminal and dangerous for one generation to approve and imitate the sins of the generations which have gone before them and left the world. Christ charges the Jews with this guilt, and threatens to punish them severely for it. "Wo unto you scribes and pharisees, hypocrites: because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, and say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets. Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers. Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell? Wherefore, behold I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city: that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel, unto the blood of Zacharias, son of Barachias, whom ye slew

between the temple and the altar. Verily I say unto you, all these things shall come upon this generation." God follows the same rule in the dispensations of his providence that he has always followed, in making the sins of a former generation the reason or occasion of punishing a succeeding generation, that approve and follow their wicked example. There is a threatening of this nature now divinely recorded, and is yet to be executed. It is a threatening to mystical Babylon for the blood of saints found in her hand. She is doomed to destruction, because in her will be found "the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that have been slain upon the earth." It is very criminal and dangerous for a present generation to approve and imitate the evil examples of those who have gone before them and perished.

5. It appears from what has been said, that it highly concerns the present generation to discountenance and restrain all open vices and immoralities that are spreading and prevailing among them. If those who are now on the stage of action do not employ their power, influence and example to check and restrain abounding iniquities and destructive practices, they will expose not only themselves, but future generations to personal and national calamities, which may sink them in temporal and eternal ruin. The present generation are living not only for themselves, but for generations to come. Those who are now on the stage of life are laying a foundation for the happiness or misery of millions who are coming after them. Their sins, like the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, may be the means of corrupting generations after generations. But if they restrain the growing corruptions of the present times, and exhibit examples of piety and virtue, they may avert the judgments, and draw down the blessings of Heaven in respect to themselves and their posterity for ages to come. These solemn and weighty motives God exhibits before the minds of all who have the Bible in their hands, to live a holy, exemplary and useful life. For he has forewarned them of the serious and important connection between their virtues and the virtues of future generations, and between their sins and the sins of future generations, and of the happy consequences of their obedience, and the fatal consequences of their disobedience and abuse of his patience. The inspired writers of both the Old and New Testaments, mark the most important periods of time, and the most important events that took place from Adam to Christ, by the succession of one generation of mankind after another. The sacred history of the world therefore seems to have been designed to teach us what great influence one generation of men has had, and will have upon another. It is

easy to trace the successive generations in our nation; and almost as easy to trace the influence which one generation has had upon another in this country. And if we view the present generation according to the analogy of past generations, it presents a melancholy prospect. Are we approving and following the piety and virtue of our forefathers, and setting as good examples to our posterity as they have left for us? No one will presume to say it. The truth is, we are setting examples that may be dangerous, if not fatal, to the next generation. Do we reverence God's word, God's sanctuary, God's day, or God's name, as the generations before us have done? Do we maintain that family religion, family government, and family instruction, which they maintained? Do we practice the virtues so necessary to promote the peace, harmony, and happiness of civil and religious society, and restrain the vices so detrimental to all our civil and religious interests, that they did? Are we not relaxing all civil and religious obligations and restraints, and paving the way to discords, contentions, anarchy, and confusion in church and state? If these things are true of the present generation, what will be the character and state of the next generation, and the generations following, unless we return to the God of our fathers, and practice the public and private, civil and religious virtues they practiced, and restrain the present prevailing vices and impieties? The present generation of mankind, in this and every part of the world, will probably have as great and extensive influence upon the next generation, as any one generation of mankind ever had upon another; yea, much greater. There is more knowledge, more zeal of every kind, and more civil and religious exertion, apparent in this generation, than have ever appeared in any former generation, from Adam to this day. The movements of this generation will very likely draw down the greatest blessings or the greatest judgments upon the world. If we do not reform, but become more and more corrupt, the blood of all past generations may be required of this. The prospect before us is extremely dark and alarming, and presents the most powerful motives to repentance and reformation. There is no doubt but great and glorious things are in reserve for this guilty world; but there may be great and awful events before such things take place. This was the case, when Christ denounced in the text the tremendous judgments coming upon his own degenerate people. And they did come before the gospel was preached all over the world. And there is great reason to think, that tremendous judgments will fall upon this or the next generation, before the gospel shall be preached

to all the present nations of the earth, and the world shall be filled with the glory of God, as the waters cover the sea.

6. In the view of this subject, we may see what great benefit saints are to the world, in the several generations in which they live. Corrupt as the world has always been, there has never been one generation entirely destitute of some good men, who exerted their pious and powerful influence for the benefit of it. Adam, the father of all mankind, was a great benefit to the generation in which he lived; Seth was a great benefit to his generation; Enos was to his generation; Cainan was to his generation; Mahalaleel was to his generation; Jared was to his generation; Enoch was to his generation; Methuselah was to his generation; Lamech was to his generation; and Noah was eminently beneficial to the whole human race, in his generation. The lives of many other pious men are clearly delineated in the sacred history, and their extensive usefulness in their several generations recorded for the instruction of all future ages. Abraham was eminently useful not only to his own generation, but to his own nation and the world in general, while he lived; and he has been useful ever since his death to this day, and will be so to the end of time. Isaac and Jacob were blessings to their generations; Moses, Joshua, Samuel, David, Hezekiah, Daniel, Ezra, and Nehemiah were all extensively useful in their several generations. All the patriarchs, prophets and good men that ever have lived, have been real blessings to the generations in which they lived; they have been the light of the world and the salt of the earth; they have drawn down the blessings of God upon themselves and upon the world; and they have equally averted divine judgments from falling upon the ungodly, who hated, opposed, persecuted and slew them. We and all other men now living, considered as nations, or as individuals, are indebted to the good men who have gone off the stage for the blessings we now enjoy, whether public or private, temporal or spiritual. All the great and important events which have taken place from generation to generation, have been connected with the prayers and services of the good men who have lived in each generation.

7. In the view of this subject, we may see that sinners always have been and are the troublers of the world. They are the Achans, that have obstructed, and, in ten thousand instances, defeated the happy influence of the pious and the virtuous. Look at Nimrod, Pharaoh, Balaam, Jeroboam, Manasseh, Haman, and more modern enemies of all righteousness. What immense mischief have they done in their several generations! How much blood have they shed, and how many evils and calamities have they brought upon the world! Mi-

nor sinners have all been united with them, and exerted all the influence they have had, in dishonoring God and injuring their fellow men. All sinners are by nature hostile to God and to the world. They have no right to say, as they often do, that it does not concern others how they feel, what they believe, or what sinful courses they pursue; for they are accountable to God only for their piety, or impiety. But no person can live in this world, without either doing good to himself and others, or doing evil to himself and others. Every man must be a friend or an enemy to God, and a friend or an enemy to the world; and an enemy to God and to the world is a troubler of the world. The connection between one person and another, and one generation and another, is very intimate, and infinitely interesting. This ought to be realized by both saints and sinners. Saints have reason to be concerned about sinners, and exert themselves for their temporal and especially their eternal benefit. And sinners have reason to be concerned about saints, who must necessarily do them good or do them harm. If their intercessions for them do not do them good, they will become intercessions against them. This was the effect of Elias's intercessions in a day of declension in Israel. Sinners in this generation need to take heed what part they act, because it will have a serious influence upon themselves, and upon the next and future generations.

This subject now calls upon parents to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Their instructions, restraints, examples, and prayers, may be the means of saving the souls of their children from death, and of preparing them to act a pious, wise, and useful part on the stage of life. But if they neglect their duty to their children, they may be sources of sorrow to themselves, and of great evil in the world, in generations to come. And what class of men have more declined in duty, than parents? And what class of men have more need of reformation? They are entreated to reform.

This subject calls as loudly upon children, as upon parents. Whether you have been well educated by your parents or not, your imperious duty is, to remember, love, and obey your Creator. If you have been well educated, you have no excuse for the neglect of duty; and if you have not been well educated, you are to be pitied and blamed for the neglect of duty.

SERMON XXXII.

THE USEFULNESS OF GOOD MEN.

NOVEMBER 12, 1826.

For he loveth our nation, and he hath built us a synagogue. — Luke, vii. 5.

A number of men may unite together for a good, or a bad purpose. When they unite for a bad purpose, they are properly a combination; but when they unite for a valuable and important purpose, they are properly called a society. This word is always taken in a good sense, though used in a very extensive latitude. Society may signify ten men, or twenty, or twenty thousand, or as many millions as can be united. There is a gradation in societies from the smallest to the largest. A church is a society; and so is a town, or a county, or a province, or a state, or a kingdom, or an empire. The same man may be a member of one, or of more different societies. The centurion mentioned in the text, was a member of the Roman empire, a member of the province of Judea, and probably a proselyte of the Jewish church. One of this man's servants lay at the point of death. And when he heard of Jesus, he sent unto him the elders of the Jews, beseeching him to come and heal his servant. These respectable men, in order to conciliate Christ to the centurion, represented him as an excellent member of society. "When they came to Jesus, they besought him instantly, saying, That he was worthy for whom he should do this: for he loveth our nation, and he hath built us a synagogue. Then Jesus went with them." This was a practical approbation of the amiable character of the centurion, which is worthy of the universal approbation of mankind in all ages,

and naturally suggests this important truth to our present consideration.

That it becomes all men to seek the general good of society.

I shall show first, what it is to seek the general good of society; and then, that it becomes all men to do it.

I. Let us consider what it is to seek the general good of society.

If society signifies any body of men who are united for some valuable and benevolent purpose, then all human societies are really consistent with each other; and a man who really seeks the good of that society to which he belongs, does really seek the good of society in general. Indeed there is no other way for an individual to seek the general good of society, but by seeking the particular good of those particular societies of which general society is composed. In this view, it is proper to speak of men's seeking the general good of society at large. Having premised this, I proceed to observe,

1. That to seek the general good of society, men must sincerely desire that good as an ultimate object. The worst member of society may desire the general good of society, when he apprehends it will have a favorable aspect upon himself; and he may seek the general good in that view of it. But this is not desiring the general good as an ultimate object, or because he loves the members of society in general. The centurion appears to have desired the general good for its own sake. "For," said the elders of the Jews, "he loveth our nation." His love to that nation led him to desire their general good as an ultimate object. And nothing but real benevolence to any society will uniformly dispose men to seek the general good of it.

2. Men's seeking the general good of society, implies their seeking that good in preference to their own. As the interest of one man may be more valuable than the interest of another, so the general interest of society is always more valuable than the interest of any particular person. This being the case, there is a just foundation for every individual to prefer the general good of society before his own personal happiness. And since there are many cases in which public and private good may come in competition, it is the part of every individual to give up his private good, just so far as the public good requires it. The good centurion preferred the general good of that society to which he belonged, before his personal property. He built them a synagogue. This leads me to say,

3. That men's seeking the general good of society farther implies their actually using all the proper means in their power to promote it. The general good of society demands some-

thing more than the good wishes or good desires of individuals; it demands their wise and vigorous exertions. When men really seek an object, they employ all the proper means in their power to obtain it. They do not rest in faint desires or feeble wishes; but actually take pains to reach the end they are seeking after. So the seeking the general good of society, implies the using of those means which are suited to attain it. All men, indeed, are not equally capable of advancing the general good of society. There is a wide difference in the personal qualities, the bodily strength, in the mental powers, in the outward circumstances, and in the various stations, relations and connections of mankind. But they are generally capable of being useful members of society, and of promoting the general good, in some way or other. None have reason to imagine that they sincerely seek the general good, unless they are willing to exert themselves to promote such a great and desirable object. We are not apt to believe that any person desires any thing within his power, unless he exerts his power to attain it. It is, therefore, natural to conclude, that men's seeking the general good of society implies the three things that have been mentioned: desiring it as an ultimate object; preferring it to personal interest; and using all proper means in their power to promote it. I proceed to show,

II. That it becomes all men to seek the general good of society. This will appear from a variety of considerations.

1. Men were formed for society. It is one important end for which they were created rational beings. No man was made solely for himself; and no man is capable of living in the world totally independent of society. The wants and weakness of mankind render society necessary for their convenience, safety and support. God has formed men with different powers and faculties, and placed them under different circumstances, that they might be able to promote each other's good. Some are wiser, richer, and stronger than others, that they may direct the conduct, supply the wants, and bear the burdens of others. Some are formed for one, and some are formed for another employment, and all are qualified for some useful business, which is conducive to the general good of society. The whole frame and contexture of mankind makes it appear that they were designed to live in society. The power of speech, or the faculty of communicating their ideas to each other, is peculiar to the human species, and indicates the Creator's design in their creation; but without society, language would answer no valuable purpose. Besides, all mankind are naturally fond of society. And, though some have supposed that all human societies have originated from necessity, yet there is no good

reason for the supposition. For, if human societies originated from necessity, they would naturally tend to dissolution; and in proportion to the increase of knowledge, power and wealth, they would verge towards extinction. But this is contrary to universal observation and experience. The longer men have lived in society, the more disagreeable and terrible is the thought of being excluded from it. These and many other considerations that might be mentioned, plainly show that God designed men should live in society, and formed them for the enjoyment of it. It becomes them, therefore, to act up to the design and dignity of their nature, and employ their knowledge, their wisdom, their wealth, and all their talents, in promoting the general good of all around them, and of all with whom they are connected and allied.

2. It becomes men to seek the general good of society, because this is the great and valuable end of entering into society. Every body of men, which deserves the name of society, unite together for some valuable and desirable purpose. No society in the world was ever formed without proposing some benefit from the union; which is the general good of the body united. If individuals saw no benefit from entering into society, they would have no disposition to enter into it. There is no openly acknowledged society to be found, but what the members of it profess to be seeking some benefit from it. This is the universal design of all societies, whether smaller or larger, whether formed for religion, or morality, or learning, or property, or safety, or friendship. It is always proposed that every member of every society should exert himself some way or other to promote the general good of the whole society. This is a good reason why every member of any society should seek the general good of the society to which he belongs. Let him belong to ever so many societies, it becomes him to seek the general good of all, by seeking the particular good of each. And since all men belong to society in general, it becomes them all to seek the general good of all. However men may conduct, it is impossible for them not to believe that it does become them to seek the general good of those with whom they live in society. As every man knows he lives in society, so he necessarily knows that he ought to seek the general good in preference to his own.

3. It becomes men to seek the general good of society, by obeying the general laws of society. Societies are not formed by mere accident. If a number of men undesignedly meet together, this does not make them a society. And let them meet together ever so often in this way, they still remain detached individuals. They must voluntarily and designedly

meet together and unite, in order to become a society. And every body of men, who voluntarily and designedly unite, are bound by some laws, either explicit or implicit, either verbal or written. Society always implies compact, and compact has the force of law, and is really binding upon those who form it. If a society be formed by mere agreement, that agreement is a law, which requires all its members to seek its general good. If a society be formed by a code of laws, which is generally the case, then all the members are obliged to obey that code of laws, or suffer the penalty annexed to disobedience. And since every member of society is obliged to obey the laws of it, he is obliged to seek the general good. The laws are not made to oblige men to seek their own good. It is always supposed that every person is naturally inclined to seek his own private personal interests. Were it not reasonable that individuals should seek the general good of society, there would be no occasion or propriety in making any laws whatever. But since it is reasonable that private good should bend to public good, every law is just which is calculated to compel men to propose the general good. And every individual is bound to obey the laws of any society to which he belongs. If a man chooses to live in a family, he is bound by the laws of that family. If a man chooses to live in a certain town, he is bound by the laws of that town. If a man chooses to live in a certain country or kingdom, he is bound by the laws of that state or kingdom. The reason is, by choosing to live in any society, a man implicitly consents to be governed by the laws of that society. Men are as much bound to obey the laws to which they give an implicit consent, as those to which they give an explicit consent. We are as much bound to obey the laws of this State which were made before we were born, as those which have been made since, either by ourselves or those elected for that purpose. All the members of society are obliged to obey the existing laws of society, which have been made by lawful authority for the general good, to which, by living in society, they have given at least their implicit consent. Now, if men are bound to obey the laws of society, then it certainly becomes them to seek the general good; for all the laws are designed to prescribe the duties of the members of society, or to point out the ways and means by which they may promote the good of the whole.

4. Every society needs the assistance or coöperation of all its members, to promote its general prosperity and happiness. Every human society resembles the human body, which has led both sacred and profane writers to speak of religious societies, political societies, learned societies, as religious, political,

learned bodies. As the human body needs the use of all its members, so every society needs the services of all the members which belong to it. The apostle Paul frequently employs this similitude, to illustrate the duties of those who belong to a religious society. "The body is not one member, but many. If the foot shall say, because I am not the hand, I am not of the body: is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, because I am not the eye, I am not of the body: is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? But now hath God set the members, every one of them in the body as it hath pleased him; and if they were all one member, where were the body? But now, are they many members, yet but one body; and the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee, nor again, the head to the feet, I have no need of you." By this same similitude, the apostle in another place illustrates the mutual obligation of the members of society, arising from their mutual relation to each other, as belonging to the same body. "So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. Having their gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; or ministry, let us wait on our ministering; or he that exhorteth, on exhortation; and he that ruleth with diligence." It is true, the apostle in these passages, is speaking of an ecclesiastical body; but all societies are of the same general nature, and stand in need of the aid and exertions of all their members. Some seem to imagine that society stands in no need of them, but this is a great mistake: it is granted, the whole body does not depend upon one member; the hand may move without the foot, and the eye without the hand; but in many cases, it would be of little consequence for the eye and hand to move, if the feet should remain immovable. So society can exist, and a part of the members perform their proper functions, while some neglect or refuse to perform theirs; yet, the neglect or refusal of one single member may be very detrimental to the whole public body. And since society needs the aid and concurrence of all its members, it highly becomes them to lend it all the aid in their power. They ought to take their place, and fill their place in the society to which they belong, whether their place be high or low, easy or laborious. No member of society is at liberty to consult merely his own pleasure or profit, but is bound to sacrifice these to the public good.

5. It becomes all men to seek the general good of society, in return for the benefits they receive from it. Though the general good of society sometimes requires individual mem-

bers to give up private good for public; yet it is always to be supposed, that individuals receive more advantage than disadvantage from society on the whole. Indeed there is scarcely any comparison in this case. The public blessings are immensely great and numerous. They are more in number than can be reckoned up, and greater in worth than can be easily described. The most independent individuals owe their principal independence to society; and the most retired and inactive persons feel the happy influence of society, though they seem to be detached from it. It becomes all therefore, who possess the powers and sensibilities of humanity, to make suitable returns for the benefits they receive from the general good of society. No man can reflect upon that constant stream of good which is perpetually flowing down to him from well regulated society, without feeling his obligation to maintain and support it. Should this stream of happiness cease to flow, the most stupid would feel their loss, and realize their obligation to promote the general good of society. Let the head of society cease to direct, and the hands to execute, and all the other members of the public body would soon find themselves in a poor, wretched, miserable state.

6. There is something so amiable and beautiful in seeking the general good, that it commands universal approbation and esteem. For this the Roman centurion was so highly esteemed and applauded by the Jewish nation. They proclaimed him a worthy and excellent man, because he loved and promoted their national prosperity. For this, Jehoiada was so much beloved and respected by the men of his generation. It is said, "Jehoiada waxed old, and was full of days when he died; an hundred and thirty years old was he when he died. And they buried him in the city of David, among the kings, because he had done good in Israel, both toward God and toward his house." For the same patriotic spirit Mordecai was so highly esteemed and admired. We are told, "Mordecai the Jew was next unto king Ahasuerus, and great among the Jews, and accepted of the multitude of his brethren, seeking the wealth of his people, and speaking peace to all his seed." The ancient Greeks and Romans, and the modern Europeans and Americans, all agree in admiring and venerating those men who in their apprehension have employed their time, their talents, their interests, and influence, in seeking and promoting the public good. Men are not generally esteemed for their natural abilities, or acquired knowledge, or their large possessions, unless they employ them in promoting the good of society. The mere neglect of this is a blemish in a human character. But there is something so beautiful

and amiable in sincerely seeking, and signally promoting the public good, that it never fails of extorting the love, the esteem, the admiration, and real veneration, of mankind, without wealth or any thing else to recommend it. I may add,

7. It becomes all men to obey the will of their Creator; and it is expressly his will that they should seek the general good. He says to every man, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." The apostle requires the same things under different forms of expression. "By love serve one another. Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth. Do good to all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith. Likewise ye younger submit yourselves to the elder. Yea, all of you, be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility. Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake. As free, and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as servants of God. Honor all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king." These, and a vast many other divine precepts, require all men to exercise pure disinterested benevolence, and to seek and promote the general good of society, by sacrificing every private personal interest which stands in competition with it.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. If it becomes men to seek the general good of society, then it becomes them to be truly religious. There is a natural, and even necessary connection between their being religious, and being good members of society. They cannot be good members of society, unless they sincerely desire the good of society, and are willing to give up their private good for the general good of society. But no man will ever do this, unless he has that charity which seeketh not her own, that charity which is the bond of perfectness, or that pure, disinterested love, which the divine law requires, and in which all true religion consists. There are but two kinds of love mentioned in the Bible; and these are the love of benevolence and the love of selfishness. The benevolent love is required, but the selfish love is condemned. Benevolent love disposes a man to seek the general good of society as his ultimate object, but selfish love disposes a man to seek his own private good as his ultimate object. It is easy to see, therefore, that no man can be a good member of any society, who is destitute of true religion or vital piety. It is true a man may be a useful member in any society while he is destitute of vital piety, because he may from selfish motives externally promote the benefit of the society to which he belongs; but he cannot be a *good* member

in any society, so long as he is destitute of true love to God and man. Every man will acknowledge that he ought to be a good, as well as useful, member of society; and by acknowledging this, he implicitly acknowledges that he ought to love God supremely, and his neighbor as himself, and become a good man as well as a good member of society. All men are under as strong obligations to be pious, as to be useful; and nothing short of real religion can make them good members of society in the sight of God, or in the sight of their own enlightened consciences. Though while they are lovers of themselves and entirely destitute of vital piety, they may do things which gain the esteem and applause of the world, yet, in their own view, and in the view of God who looketh on the heart and not on the outward appearance, they are mean, mercenary, guilty, unprofitable creatures. They rob God of that glory which they owe to him, and rob their fellow men of that pure, disinterested love which they owe to them. If their conscience should be awakened to do its office, and constrain them to look into their own hearts, they would view themselves as God views them, abhor themselves as God abhors them, condemn themselves as God condemns them, and feel that they are unfit to live or to die, until they turn from selfishness to benevolence, and seek the glory of God and the general good, as their ultimate object. Though Paul thought, while he was a stranger to vital piety, that he loved the laws, the religion, and the good of his nation, and had whereof to boast of his usefulness, yet, when the law of pure, disinterested love was brought home to his conscience, he condemned and abhorred himself for all the good things he had done from selfish, mercenary, and sinful motives. He found that all the good things he had done while he had been living to himself and not to God, were lost and worse than lost; and that he could not serve God, nor his generation, without living a holy, devout, pious life. No sinner has any more to boast of than Paul had, and it deeply concerns him, however amiable, virtuous, or useful he may appear in his own eyes, or in the eyes of the world, to look back upon his selfish and sinful life with penitence and self-loathing, renounce his self-dependence and self-righteousness, and consecrate himself to God, and to the service of his generation.

2. In the view of this subject, parents may learn how much it becomes and concerns them to educate their children in the best manner to qualify them to promote not only their own good, but the general good of society. Parents in general can do more to promote the general good of society, by giving their children a good education, than in any other way. And if they

themselves do sincerely aim to promote the general good of society, they will desire and endeavor to qualify their children to promote the same important object, after they are laid in their graves. It is their duty and their privilege to take care of their children in their young and tender and most teachable age. Their children are very early capable of receiving instruction in almost every branch of useful knowledge. While they are very young, they are capable of receiving instruction in the first principles and duties of practical piety. Then is the proper time for parents to pour religious instruction into their tender and retentive minds; for what they are taught then, they can never easily forget. If they are then taught to remember, to love, and to obey their Creator, though their hearts may rise against such instruction, yet their consciences will always feel their obligations to pray to God, to read his word, to keep his Sabbath, to reverence his name and his house, and to give him their hearts and lives.

Parents, by a critical observation of their children while under their immediate care and government, may form a very correct judgment of their natural inclinations, and of their corporeal and intellectual talents and abilities; and, when they have made this important discovery, it becomes their duty to give them such a private or public education as shall best qualify them for the various callings and employments, in which they may be the most useful to themselves and to the world, in the course of life. Children of the same family very often have very different abilities and inclinations, which parents ought to gratify, by giving them an education which may best prepare them for that art, or calling, or profession, which they appear the most capable and most fond of pursuing. It is unwise and dangerous to force nature. Parents are very apt to follow their own choice in directing the education and employments of their children. Some parents wish to have their children follow the most lucrative employments; some parents wish to have their children follow the most reputable employments; and some parents wish to have their children follow the most useful employments. But they often injure and destroy the happiness and usefulness of their children, by obliging them to pursue studies and employments for which they have no genius nor inclination. Thousands and thousands of children have been made useless and miserable by such misjudging parents. It is the duty and wisdom of all parents to have a primary and ultimate regard to the general good of society, and to educate their children so as to qualify them in the best manner to promote that great and important object. Every child of a sound mind is capable of receiving

such an education as may fit him for that lower or higher employment in life, for which nature formed him. That all men are equal in either a natural, or moral, or religious view, is absolutely false; but that they may all be useful in these views, is an important truth, which parents in particular ought to believe, and to act accordingly in the education of their children.

3. It appears, in view of this discourse, that all men are morally bound to promote the general good of society, in proportion to the various abilities they possess.

Knowledge gives men ability to promote their own good, and the general good. This they all possess in different degrees. Some have one talent, some five, and some ten. But whether they have more or less natural and acquired knowledge, they are bound to increase in knowledge, and to employ all they have in doing good to themselves and to the world. They have no right to bury or abuse their intellectual talents. Knowledge is power; and every man has power in proportion to his knowledge, which he is indispensably bound to employ for his own good, and the general good of society. The more knowledge any man has, the more capable he is of doing good to any and to every society to which he belongs, and whose interest and prosperity he is peculiarly bound to promote.

Wealth gives men ability to do good. Let the rich live where they will, Christ tells them that they will always have the poor with them, who are proper objects of benevolence and beneficence. Nor is this all. The wealthy are more able than others to promote the good of their nation, or the good of their city, or the good of the religious society of which they are members; and they are bound, in proportion to their property, to do good in all these various ways.

Men in authority have peculiar ability to promote the general good of society. They are clothed with authority for this important purpose; and they cannot fulfil their obligations to God or man, unless they employ all the authority they have, whether more or less, in carrying terror to evil-doers, and giving encouragement to them that do well.

As it becomes all men to pursue some lawful calling, employment, or profession, so it becomes them to pursue their various callings, employments, and professions, in the best manner to promote not only their own good, but the general good of society. No man was ever made solely for himself, and no man has a right to live solely to himself. He is a member of society, and receives benefit from society, and society has a just claim upon him, to employ his corporeal strength, or his intellectual powers, or his wealth, or influence,

or authority, for the general benefit of society. Whether men belong to a lower or higher rank in life, and whether they belong to smaller or larger societies, it becomes them to show themselves men, by acting up to the dignity of their nature, and the great end of their noble and rational existence.

4. Since it becomes all men to promote the general good of society, it is unbecoming men to pursue any courses which are either directly or indirectly injurious to the public good. I do not mean such practices as are universally infamous; but such as many esteem innocent and harmless, if not reputable. No poor man, who has health and strength and activity, has a right to spend his precious time in idleness, and clothe himself or family in rags. He disobeys an express command of God, and becomes a nuisance to society. How many such poor, wretched, guilty creatures, are strolling about the country, degrading themselves and injuring others! And their numbers are continually increasing. Such idlers as these often meet with deserved contempt.

But there are others, who are no less indolent and no less criminal, who claim to be, and are, respected. They are rich and able to live without labor, and without pursuing any reputable or useful profession. They imagine their wealth gives them a license to indulge themselves in sloth, and in vain and unmanly amusements, which are destructive to health and all intellectual improvements and enjoyments, and unfit them for every duty they owe to God and to society. Idleness was one of the sins of Sodom, which destroyed it; and it tends to corrupt and destroy any nation or society in which it prevails. It is unbecoming any member of any society to be guilty of it.

Not only idlers, but all profane swearers, Sabbath-breakers, neglecters and despisers of all religion, act a part highly detrimental to human society. Though their conduct has become fashionable and even reputable, yet it ought to be universally reprobated by every one who is a friend to God and man. How many at this day seem to think they do no injury to any body but themselves, if they take the name of God in vain, if they labor or travel on the Sabbath, if they neglect family government, family religion, public worship, and despise and ridicule the Bible! But however fashionable and reputable such conduct may be, it indirectly tends to subvert all religion, morality, government and public good. If it be not the greatest, it is certainly the most universal form of sin in the world. It is a procuring cause of the civil and religious, the private and public calamities, which overspread the earth. This must be true; for if all men were heartily united in promoting the general good of society, it would introduce order, peace and hap-

piness, among the whole human race. There would be none to hurt or destroy in all God's holy mountain.

5. It appears from what has been said, that those who are truly pious are the best men in the world. They are the only men who have true love to God and man. The rest of the world are entirely destitute of the least spark of vital piety. They have not the love of God in them. They are lovers of their own selves and seekers of their own interests. Though they may be instrumental of promoting the good of the public, yet they primarily and ultimately seek their own separate, private good. Those who built the ark were instrumental of saving the whole world from utter ruin; but we have no reason to think that any one of them had the least regard to the glory of God, and the good of mankind. They were all hirelings, and acted from mere mercenary motives. This is now true of all men, who are destitute of the grace of God. Though they often think they desire to promote the public good, and make others think they desire to do it, yet they deceive both themselves and others. But those who possess true piety act from higher and nobler motives, whether they act in a private or public capacity. If they choose to labor with their hands and cultivate the earth, and support themselves by the sweat of their brow, they labor for God and their fellow men in promoting the general good of society. They mean to employ the fruits of the field, not only for their own benefit, but for the benefit of their friends and country. It seems that Barzillai, like one of the kings of Israel, loved husbandry, cultivated the earth, and accumulated a large property, which he liberally employed to relieve David and his men in the day of adversity and deep distress. The same noble spirit reigns, more or less, in the hearts of all the truly pious and benevolent, while they are guiding the plough and breaking up their fallow ground. If other men of piety choose to employ their time and talents in pursuing a more public course of life, they choose to pursue it upon a benevolent principle and for a benevolent purpose. Whatever public profession they choose, whether law, physic, or divinity, they mean to serve God and their generation. Pious lawyers, pious physicians, and pious ministers, have never failed of attaining, to a greater or less degree, their ultimate and supreme object. They have been the light of the world, the salt of the earth, and the great benefactors of mankind. Enoch was a preacher of righteousness, and had a salutary restraining influence upon a wicked generation. Moses, Samuel, and Jehoiada were eminently useful while they lived. Luke was a pious and well informed physician, and his gospel will be an everlasting monument of his love to Christ and to his cause, and of his

extensive usefulness to the end of time. Paul was the great apostle to the Gentiles, who did more perhaps than any other man ever did, to spread and establish pure christianity through the world. The godly have always been the excellent of the earth, and the best men that have ever lived on it. They have done more than any other men to draw down public blessings, and to avert and remove public calamities. If usefulness be the proper standard by which to measure the worth and importance of men, then men of piety are the best men in the world, whether they are rich or poor, whether they have greater or smaller talents, and whether they fill higher or lower stations in life. Hence,

6. We learn the goodness of God in prolonging the lives of his pious and faithful servants. He is good to his cordial friends in carrying them in his arms, and guiding and guarding their lives, even to old age. He has promised this as a mark of his favor to the godly man. He says, "With long life will I satisfy him, and show him my salvation." Life is both sweet and precious, and good men deprecate an early death. David and Hezekiah deprecated being cut off in the midst of their days of doing and getting good. God heard their cry, and satisfied their pious and benevolent desire. God is good not only to the godly themselves, but to the world, in prolonging their lives, and lengthening out their days of activity and usefulness. It was a great favor to the world that God preserved the lives, of Abraham, Moses, Daniel, and John, to a very great age. God is good to pious parents, when he preserves their lives, and gives them time and opportunity to bring up their children for him, and qualify them to promote the general good. God is good to a church, and a town, when he protracts the lives and usefulness of those who are pious and capable of watching over, guiding and directing their civil and religious concerns. Such men, like the centurion, who seek the good of the church and of the state, are worthy of the love, the esteem, and the gratitude, of every society, whether civil or religious, to which they belong: and the goodness of God, in protracting their lives and usefulness, ought to be acknowledged and remembered after they are laid in the dust. These remarks, and indeed the whole tenor of this discourse, naturally lead us to reflect upon the goodness of God to this church and people, in so long protracting the life and usefulness of the late Deacon Joseph Whiting.

For more than fifty years he professed to believe, to love, and to obey the gospel; and he carried evidence to all around him that he was sincere in his godly professions, by living a godly and exemplary life. He constantly and punctually main-

tained family religion and family government, and as constantly and punctually attended public worship and divine ordinances, as long as his bodily and mental infirmities permitted. He loved the church; he loved the town; and I may safely say, he loved his neighborhood, and was loved and esteemed by them. He was a pillar in the church and in the state. He loved his country, and was always forward, by his voice, his influence, and his property, to promote its liberty, prosperity, and happiness. He was hospitable, liberal, and charitable. He was very free from ambition, avarice, oppression, and contention. He was truly a peace-maker. In the several civil and religious offices which he sustained, he was so frank, open, undisguised, and impartial, that every one placed unreserved confidence in him. He was a Nazarite indeed. Very few men in his rank in life have done more good, have been more esteemed, and have more deserved to be had in long and grateful remembrance, not only by those who have personally and largely shared in his beneficence, but by all this people.

We have no reason to regret that death has come at last, and relieved him from the peculiar pains and infirmities of old age, and conveyed him, as we hope, to that everlasting rest prepared for the people of God. But we have reason to mourn that another righteous man is taken away, who once stood in the gap, to ward off deserved and impending evils. We have much occasion to cry, "Help, Lord, for the godly man ceaseth, and the faithful fail from among the children of men." We know, "The Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither is his ear heavy, that it cannot hear." He may repair the numerous breaches in this church, and here give Christ a seed to serve him, from generation to generation.

SERMON XXXIII.

DUTY OF A PROSPEROUS NATION.

NOVEMBER 30, 1826.

THUS saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might; let not the rich man glory in his riches; But let him that glorieth, glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord which exercise loving kindness, judgment and righteousness in the earth: for in these things I delight saith the Lord. — JER. ix. 23, 24.

THE prophet, in the beginning of this chapter, laments in tears the extreme sinfulness of his nation. He cries, "O that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people." He paints their abounding iniquities in the blackest colors; and God confirms the truth of his description: "Shall I not visit them for these things saith the Lord; shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?" This was a prediction of the heavy calamities which God was just ready to bring upon them in their long captivity in Babylon. But they despised these predicted marks of the divine displeasure, and gloried in their own prosperity, security and self-sufficiency. They felt sufficient to maintain their present prosperity and independence. But God tells them that all their glorying in themselves is vain and presumptuous. "Thus saith the Lord, let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me that I am the Lord which exercise loving-kindness, judgment and righteousness in the earth: for in these

things I delight saith the Lord." To glory is to rejoice, and therefore the term is sometimes used in a good sense, and sometimes in a bad sense. It is used in both senses in the text. God both forbids and requires his people to glory or rejoice. He forbids them to glory or rejoice in themselves, but requires them to glory or rejoice in him. The spirit of the text may be expressed in this general observation:

It is the duty of a nation in prosperity to rejoice in God and not in themselves. I shall,

I. Explain what it is for a prosperous nation to rejoice in themselves.

II. Explain what it is for them to rejoice in God. And,

III. Show that this is their duty.

I. I am to explain what it is for a prosperous nation to rejoice in themselves.

1. It is to rejoice in their own national prosperity because it is their own, and superior to that of other nations. The Jews were God's chosen people, to whom he promised to give great national prosperity, so long as they obeyed the commands he had given them for their good. Moses told them, "The Lord shall make thee plenteous in goods, in the fruit of thy body, and in the fruit of thy cattle, and in the fruit of thy ground, in the land which the Lord sware unto thy fathers to give thee. The Lord shall open unto thee his good treasure, the heaven to give the rain unto thy land in his season, and to bless all the work of thine hand: and thou shalt lend unto many nations, and thou shalt not borrow. And the Lord shall make thee the head, and not the tail: and thou shalt be above only, and thou shalt not be beneath." While God continued to pour such rich blessings into their bosoms, they rejoiced in their own national prosperity because it was their own, and because it was superior to the prosperity of the nations round about them, or to that of any other nation in the world. They rejoiced in their own prosperity, and in their own superior prosperity, which was glorying in themselves, and expressive of both their selfishness and vanity. And whenever any people thus rejoice in their own prosperity because it is their own, and because it is superior to that of other nations, they rejoice in themselves, and boast of their selfishness and vanity.

2. A people rejoice in themselves, when they ascribe their national prosperity to their own self-sufficiency. This is what the prophet warns the people of God against in the text. They rejoiced that they had gained their national prosperity by their own exertions, and were still able to maintain it by their own exertions. Individuals, by expressing their own feelings, expressed the general feelings of the nation. The wise man glo-

ried and rejoiced in his wisdom; the mighty man gloried and rejoiced in his might; and the rich man gloried and rejoiced in his riches. It was the general feeling of the nation, that they had gained their superior prosperity, by their superior political wisdom, by their superior martial skill and courage, and by their superior wealth and independent resources. And they rejoiced, that by these means, they were able to maintain their superior prosperity against all the attempts of the Babylonians, or any other hostile nation, to destroy it. This was emphatically rejoicing in themselves, and boasting of their own superiority to all other nations in wisdom, wealth and martial prowess. And when any nation in the day of prosperity, cherish and express such feelings, they rejoice in themselves, and discover their unreasonable selfishness and vanity. I proceed,

II. To explain what it is for a nation in prosperity, to rejoice in God. Here I may observe,

1. It is to understand and know that God is the governor of the world. This God himself says is to glory and rejoice in him. "But let him that glorieth, glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord." God is the creator, and of course the preserver and governor of the world. As creator, he has an original independent right to exercise a supreme and universal superintendency over it. It belongs to him who made and upholds the world, to act as an absolute sovereign in governing it. He has a right to govern not only the material but the moral part of the world. He has a right to fix the bounds and number the months of all the children of men. He has a right to raise up one nation and destroy another. He has a right to give prosperity to one nation and not to another. He has a right to dispense private and public, civil and religious favors as he pleases. He has a right to govern every person, and every thing respecting every person, in the best manner to answer his own wise and holy purposes. This right to govern the world, he universally exercises, and actually governs the world as much as it is possible for him to govern it; and this every nation and every person must understand and know, in order to rejoice in him, as the governor of the world, and the giver of every good and perfect gift.

2. For a nation in prosperity, to rejoice in God, implies rejoicing not only that he governs the world, but that he displays his great and amiable perfections in governing it. This is that rejoicing which he requires and will approve. "Let him that glorieth, glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord, which exercise loving-kindness, judgment and righteousness in the earth; for in these things I delight, saith the Lord." The only reason we have to rejoice that God

governs the world, is, that he displays his great and glorious perfections in governing it. In the display of these, there is abundant reason to rejoice.

Here, in the first place, there is reason to rejoice in the judgment or wisdom God displays in the government of the world. He says in the text, that he exercises judgment in the earth. Judgment often signifies prudence, discretion, or wisdom. As judgment in the text stands distinguished from kindness and righteousness, it most naturally signifies wisdom. God certainly exercised wisdom in the creation of the world. Hence David exclaims, "O Lord, how manifold are thy works; in wisdom hast thou made them all!" God displays the same wisdom in governing the world that he displayed in creating it. If he does not govern the world in wisdom, there is no reason to rejoice in his universal supremacy and dominion, but reason to regret that the world is in his hands. If God does not exercise his wisdom in giving prosperity to a person or people, they would have no ground to rejoice in their prosperity; for it might eventually prove a dreadful calamity. Unless God governs the world in infinite, unerring wisdom, there is no ground to rejoice in any dispensations of providence; for all things may finally terminate in perfect confusion and misery. But, since he assures us that he does exercise judgment in the earth, and displays the same wisdom in governing that he has displayed in creating the world, every person and every nation have good ground to glory and rejoice in him at all times and in all circumstances, whether of prosperity or adversity. His unsearchable wisdom which he displays in all the dispensations of providence, affords a ground for always rejoicing in him.

In the next place, there is reason to rejoice in the moral rectitude and perfect righteousness which God displays in the government of the world. He knows all the relations which mankind bear to him and to one another, can weigh all their interests in an equal scale, and is disposed to treat them all according to his moral, immutable rectitude. This he professes to do, in the text. He says, "I am the Lord which exercise righteousness in the earth." He is the righteous Lord who loveth righteousness, and displays it in all his conduct towards every person and every nation in the world. Though he treats the inhabitants of the earth very differently in ten thousand instances and in ten thousand respects, yet in the dispensations of providence, he regards the interest of every individual person and of every individual nation exactly according to its real worth and importance, and never commits a single instance of injustice in any of the public or private blessings which he bestows, or which he withholds, or which he takes away. While

mankind are committing ten thousand acts of injustice towards one another, he who is the governor of the world and judge of all the earth, always does right. This is a good reason why we should always rejoice in the Lord, in the day of prosperity; for our prosperity, whether private or public, does not injure any other person or any other nation on the face of the earth. In the last place,

There is reason to rejoice in the perfect benevolence which God displays in the government of the world. In this he would have every one glory and rejoice, for he glories and rejoices in it himself. "Let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord which exercise loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth; for in these things I delight, saith the Lord." God is good, and doeth good; he is good unto all, and his loving-kindness and tender mercies are over all his works. He is not grudgingly good, but spontaneously good; it is his delight to do good in all the dispensations of providence. He every day and every moment fills the earth with his goodness. He giveth life, and breath, and all things. He displays his goodness every where, and towards every person and every nation in every part of the world. He is continually doing as much good as his wisdom, his justice, his power, and his goodness, enable him to do. He removes every evil that it is best to remove, and bestows every mercy that it is best to bestow. "The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice, let the multitude of isles be glad thereof." But this leads me to show,

III. That this is the duty of all mankind, especially of every nation in the day of prosperity. And,

1. Because God has given them all their national prosperity. If they have wise men among them, God has made them wise. If they have mighty men among them, God has made them mighty. If they have rich men among them, God has made them rich. If they have good men among them, who understand and know that the Lord exercises loving-kindness, judgment and righteousness in the earth, God has made them good. God has given them all their wisdom, all their power, all their wealth, all their piety, and all their temporal and spiritual prosperity. He has taken pleasure in giving them all these good things, "for in these things I delight, saith the Lord." In whom then ought a people in prosperity to glory and rejoice? In themselves, or in God? If they rejoice, let them rejoice in God. If they glory, let them glory in God. If they boast, let them boast in God, to whose loving-kindness and tender mercy they are indebted for all their prosperity.

2. It is the imperious duty of a prosperous nation to rejoice

in God, because he only, in his governing goodness, can promote and preserve their prosperity. As God displays his wisdom, power, and goodness, in raising a nation to prosperity, so he must continue to exercise the same glorious perfections in raising their prosperity higher and higher. A young nation especially need to grow in wisdom, power, wealth, and piety. But their growth, in all those respects, depends upon the same almighty and benevolent Being, who gave them their prosperity at first. Unless they rejoice in him, they have no ground to expect that he will foster and promote their future prosperity. When God raised his ancient, chosen people to a state of superior prosperity, he plainly told them that he would continue to smile upon them, so long as they continued to rejoice in him, and to obey the commands he had given them for their good, but threatened to frown upon them, if they became ungrateful and disobedient. The more a prosperous people rejoice in God, the more thankful they are for his favors; and the more obedient they are to all the intimations of his will, the more reason they have to hope that he will continue their prosperity. Besides, the more prosperous any nation is, the more they are exposed to national enemies, who will wish and endeavor to destroy their prosperity. This was the case of the Jews in their prosperity; this was the case of the Greeks in their prosperity; and this was the case of the Romans in their prosperity. In the course of providence, God has actually destroyed the great prosperity which each of these nations once enjoyed, and he has done this in all cases by the instrumentality of their national enemies. God has always employed one wicked nation to destroy another. Every prosperous nation is in danger of losing its prosperity. Whenever God sees fit to destroy the prosperity of an ungrateful, disobedient nation, he can raise up their enemies, who will rejoice to do the work. It is, therefore, the duty and interest of a nation in prosperity, to rejoice in God, and engage him to protect and defend them against all their national enemies.

It now remains to apply this subject pertinently and plainly.

1. We have seen what it is for a people, in prosperity, to rejoice in themselves, and to rejoice in God, and that these two kinds of rejoicing are entirely opposite to each other. The one is right and the other is wrong; the one is pleasing, and the other displeasing to God. God is pleased when a nation ascribe their prosperity to him, and rejoice in the wisdom, power, justice, and goodness, which he displayed in raising them to temporal and spiritual eminence among the nations of the earth. But he is greatly displeased if they rejoice in themselves, and ascribe all their prosperity to their own wisdom,

power, wealth, and piety. If this be true, are not we as a prosperous nation, verily guilty of a great national sin, in rejoicing in ourselves, and ascribing our peculiar prosperity to our own exertions? Have we not ascribed our national independence to the wisdom of our wise men? Have we not ascribed our federal constitution to the wisdom of our politicians? Have we not ascribed the administration of our national government to our wise rulers? Have we not ascribed our national transactions with foreign nations to the political skill of our statesmen and ambassadors at foreign courts? Have we not ascribed to our mighty men of valor the battles we have fought, and the victories we have gained, by sea and land? Have we not gloried in our wealth and independent resources, for carrying on war with foreign nations? Have we not gloried in our numbers, and presumed to calculate to how many millions we shall increase in a century, or half a century more? Have we not boasted of our mechanical knowledge and invention, in building ships and steam-boats, and preparing the munitions of war, and self-defence? And have we not sometimes gloried in our national goodness, virtue, and piety? Who can read the numerous eulogiums which have been made and published upon our national wisdom, wealth, power, influence, goodness, and independent prosperity and security, without seeing and lamenting our national selfishness and vanity? Hence,

2. Have we not reason to fear, that our national prosperity will be followed with national calamities, and desolating judgments? God has certainly seen how much we have rejoiced in ourselves, and boasted of that prosperity which he has displayed his power, and wisdom, and goodness to grant us. These things have been highly displeasing to him; and will he not say, in respect to us, as he did to ungrateful, disobedient, and boasting Israel: "Shall I not visit for these things? shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?" We have long acknowledged, that God almost wrought miracles in giving us our independence and subsequent prosperity. But it will require no such signal interpositions of providence, to diminish our wealth, our numbers, our strength, our civil and religious liberties, our peace and harmony; and to throw us into national discords, and involve us in all the miseries of domestic and foreign wars. There are great and powerful nations now, who look upon our prosperity with an evil eye; and they may soon think it is policy to interrupt and destroy, if possible, our growing power, which we have so often boasted of exercising over the civil and religious world. We are evidently in danger from Britain, France, and Spain, as well as

from the hostile natives of our own country. France and Britain have both employed these savages to annoy us, and may do it again.

But allowing that we have wisdom and power enough to awe our enemies, or to defend ourselves against them; God can find ways enough to punish us for our national ingratitude and abuse of his favors. There is danger to be feared, I imagine, from the union which has lately been established among four or five denominations of christians, for the good purpose of checking the growth of infidelity, and many gross and dangerous errors in the United States. It would not be strange if these different denominations should fall out by the way, and one should gain an ascendency over all the rest, and bring about the establishment of a national religion.

There is, however, more danger to be feared at present, from the neglect of family government, family religion, public worship, and the profanation of the Sabbath, than from any other and all other vices and immoralities that abound. These strike at the root of all order, government, and religion. And the criminality of these is highly aggravated by our national prosperity.

This subject now calls upon all good men to perform the duty of thanksgiving and praise. There are no others prepared to keep this thanksgiving day properly and acceptably. They have never been thankful for any private or public, civil or religious favor. They have always rejoiced in themselves, and gloried in their own self-sufficiency to gain all the good they have enjoyed. They are strangers to the least spark of gratitude to God, for any favor they have received from his kind and beneficent hand. The wise man has gloried in his wisdom, the mighty man has gloried in his might, the rich man has gloried in his riches, the young man has gloried in his vanity, and the vicious man has gloried in his shame. But good men have understood and known that God is the Lord, and governor of the world, who exercises loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth; and that he delights in filling it with his goodness, notwithstanding the general unbelief, ingratitude, and disobedience of mankind. They rejoice in God that he is good to themselves, and gives them all things richly to enjoy, and withholds no good thing from them. They rejoice in God, that he does good to the evil and unthankful. They rejoice in God, that he grants personal, family, and national prosperity. They rejoice in the Lord always, both in prosperity and adversity. They know that God is light, and in him there is no darkness at all. They know that he is constantly sowing light for the righteous, and

joy for the upright in heart. They know the good that he has promised to the children of light, and that his faithfulness shall never fail. Although the fig-tree should not blossom, nor fruit be in the vine, and the labor of the olive should fail, and the fields should yield no meat, yet they will have solid ground to rejoice in the Lord, and to joy in the God of their salvation. Now, why will not you who have always rejoiced in yourselves, be entreated to rejoice with them who rejoice in the Lord? You must rejoice in the Lord in this world, or you never will rejoice in him in the next. And if you do not rejoice in him this Thanksgiving day, some of you may never see another.

SERMON XXXIV.

THE GUILT OF PROFANENESS.

DECEMBER 10, 1826.

THOU shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain. — EXODUS, xx. 7.

THIS is one of the ten commandments which God gave to his people at mount Sinai, by his own voice; and it is as easy to be understood as any of the rest. It does not mean that men may not make use of any of the divine names, titles, or attributes, on proper occasions. The Jews had a notion that the name Jehovah might never be used by the common people. Nor does it mean that men may not make use of God's name to confirm their testimony before a court of justice. For this was expressly required in certain cases. "If a man deliver unto his neighbor an ass, or an ox, or a sheep, or any beast to keep, and it die, or be hurt, or driven away, no man seeing it: then shall an oath of the Lord be between them both, that he hath not put his hand unto his neighbor's goods; and the owner of it shall accept thereof, and he shall not make it good." But the command, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain," does forbid men to call God to witness perjury or false swearing; or to call upon God to curse, or punish, or destroy, any of their fellow creatures; or to use his name in a vain, trifling, contemptuous manner. Or, in fewer words, this precept forbids all profane cursing and swearing, which so much abound in the world, and which ought to be universally suppressed. Not to waste time, therefore, in describing a vice which is but too common and too well known, I shall directly proceed to offer a number of considerations to dissuade men from committing this

pernicious and prevailing vice, and to impress their minds with some proper sense of the great guilt and danger of taking the name of the Lord their God in vain. Here I will begin by observing,

1. God has forbidden all profane language, in a manner the most solemn, and best adapted to make the deepest impression on the hearts and consciences of men. Moses having, by divine direction, sanctified the people, and prepared them to meet God, "It came to pass on the third day, in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud: so that all the people that was in the camp trembled. And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire; and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly." Amidst these solemn scenes, the Lord descended upon the mount and spake out of the cloud, "saying, Thou shalt have no other Gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain." When this third commandment was given by the living voice of the only living God, there was not a single soul in the camp of Israel that durst to take the name of the Lord his God in vain. This command is founded in the nature of things. It is right that men should love and revere their glorious and amiable creator, and it is wrong that they should ever take his name in vain. It is right that the Creator should give laws to his rational creatures and clothe them with his supreme authority. This command against profane swearing is founded in the nature of things, and sanctioned by the highest authority in the universe, and is of perpetual obligation. Every species of profane language is a transgression of this holy and righteous command, and as criminal now under the gospel, as it was under the law. It is a sin directly committed against God, which extremely aggravates its guilt. "If one man sin against another, the judge shall judge him: but if a man sin against the Lord, who shall entreat for him?" Though God does not now speak to men from the burning mount, yet he now speaks to them with the same authority, and solemnly forbids them to take his name in vain upon pain of his just and eternal displeasure. Whoever uses profane language in the highest or lowest degree, virtually calls upon God to pour upon him the weight of his almighty wrath. Let every man, therefore, whether young or old, high or low, be dissuaded from taking the name of the holy, sin-hating and sin-revenging God, in vain.

2. Taking the name of God in vain is destructive of all religion. A profane person cannot love, nor fear, nor obey, nor trust in

God. Who can love a being whom he despises? Who can fear a being whom he despises? Who can obey a being whom he despises? Or who can trust in a being whom he despises? He who takes the name of God in vain, expresses his perfect contempt of his being, of his perfections, of his laws, of his government, of his love, and of his hatred. He despises the very idea of a supreme being, who is able to govern, reward, or punish him. He openly declares that he feels above his creator, preserver, law-giver, and judge. Can such a person have one religious affection, or perform one religious duty? He treats God and religion with supreme contempt; and would, were it in his power, make God and religion appear odious and contemptible in the eyes of all mankind. There is no other vice that strikes so directly at the root of all religion, as profane swearing; for it brings God, the only ground and object of religion, into contempt; and when he is brought into contempt, all religious worship must be contemptible. Men may run into other vices merely to gratify their vicious hearts, without any thoughts of God, or desires to bring reproach upon him; but he who takes the name of God in vain, thinks and speaks of God with a design to bring dishonor upon him and upon all religion. This never fails to shock the feelings and excite the disapprobation of all the sober part of mankind, among both christians and heathens. While Paul stood in the midst of Mars-hill, he said, "Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious;" or as it might be rendered, too religious. They had a multitude of gods whom they venerated and adored, and whom they would not allow any man to reproach, contemn, or profane, with impunity. When Alcibiades, their renowned general, the night before he was going against their enemies, presumptuously profaned the names of their gods, they rose in resentment and forbade him to march, until he confessed and atoned for his impious and profane conduct. They were afraid that the gods whom he had contemned would blast his enterprise. It is the common sense of all nations, that to take the name of the being whom they worship in vain, is destructive of all religion, and the highest crime that man can commit. It is, therefore, of all sins the most to be avoided.

3. The profanation of God's name tends to weaken and destroy the force and obligation of every civil government. Every civil society find the necessity of making laws to preserve their property, their liberty, and their lives. But their laws would be of little use to answer these important purposes, without the aid of solemn oaths. Causes before a civil judicature cannot be properly tried and decided, without the credible testimony

of living witnesses. But human nature is so corrupt, and witnesses may be under so many temptations to falsify the truth, that their simple declarations, without the confirmation of a solemn oath, cannot be safely considered as worthy of full credit. Jews, and christians, and heathens, have always been in the practice of confirming their declarations and testimonies in solemn and important cases, by appealing to the being whom they call their god and judge to approve their veracity, or condemn their perjury. But of what avail would it be to appeal to God, if his name may be profaned, and his favor and frown may be disregarded with impunity? The profanation of God's name directly tends to bring God, religion, and oaths into contempt; and when these are brought into contempt, how can civil government be administered to preserve the property, liberty, or lives of the subjects. Profane cursing and swearing in a lower degree, and perjury in the highest degree, tend to prostrate every civil government, and to destroy all the good it is designed to promote. Though a man who takes the name of God in vain every day, may fear the solemnity of a civil oath, yet there is reason to fear he will contemn it, and commit a perjury without remorse. All cursing and swearing is a gross breach not only of the law of God, but of the law of the land, and ought to be universally detested and avoided.

4. Profane swearing is the most unnatural sin in this wicked world. It does not originate from any natural propensity, instinct or appetite in the human mind, but is contrary to every dictate of reason and conscience. No one ever heard profane language for the first time without being shocked. No child ever uses it until he has learned it from others. There are many vices to which mankind are naturally prone, because they gratify some of their natural inclinations; and we can easily account for their running into these without being led. But profane language is almost universally learned, and learned gradually. Some begin to learn it very early from their parents, or from others in the family where they live. But their young and tender consciences never fail at first to condemn them for the profane words they utter, and it afterwards takes years to confirm them in the habit of profaneness. The sin of profane swearing is attended with great aggravation of guilt, both before the habit is formed and afterwards. Before it is formed and while forming, the child, the youth, or the man, sins directly against the dictates of his conscience, and after his habit is formed, he sins from the very worst of motives. He means to bring God and religion into contempt, and destroy all restraints from sin, arising from God, from religion, and from eternity. He does not take any peculiar pleasure in profane language

itself, but only in the hardening and stupifying nature of profane oaths and curses. He finds by using these, that he silences the remonstrances of conscience, the dread of God and a miserable eternity; and when these most powerful restraints are removed, he can live in ease and security in any sinful course he pleases. Who can live a worse life than an habitual profane swearer, who bids defiance to his conscience, to his God, and to the awful retributions of eternity?

5. To use profane language is below the dignity of any man. It requires no superior knowledge, learning, or intellectual talents, to take the name of God in vain, or to rise to the highest attainments in the art of swearing. It is a low and grovelling vice. It disqualifies a man to move in the higher, nobler and more respectable circles, and prepares him to mix with the meanest and vilest of the human race. You may now and then meet with a man of some respectability, who occasionally uses profane language; but you cannot mix with any class or body of men who freely and habitually indulge themselves in this infamous vice, who do not belong to the lowest order of human society. Sailors and soldiers, who are the most exposed to sickness, danger and death, are the most addicted to profane swearing. It is easy to account for this, in two ways. They are the most out of the reach of all restraints from religious society and religious worship; and at the same time, they are the most exposed to every species of danger, which leads them to harden their hearts as much as possible against death, judgment and eternity. And so long as they can summon courage enough to take the name of God in vain, and treat him with contempt, they imagine there is no danger to be feared from death, judgment and eternity. But who can justify their stupid and presumptuous conduct? Where is the child, or the youth, or the man, that has had a religious education, read his Bible, and attended public worship, who can make himself believe that it will promote his peace, his reputation, his usefulness, and future happiness, to take the name of God in vain, and follow the example of the vilest and meanest of mankind? If he cannot make himself believe this, let him pray with David: "Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips;" let not a profane word ever drop from them.

6. Profane swearing is a vice which never lives alone. Who ever knew a profane swearer that was free from every other vice? No such person can be found. It is true, a profane swearer may not be a liar, a thief, or a drunkard; but it is the nature and tendency of his profaneness to lead him into these and all other vices. For it takes off the most powerful

restraints that can be laid upon the human mind. It tends to weaken, deaden, and destroy all sense of moral obligation arising from the character, the laws, and the government of God, and from the great realities of the invisible and eternal world. What is there then to hinder such a man from lying, stealing, murder, or any other crime? His heart is hardened against God, and his conscience is seared against guilt. The man who dares to trifle with God and profane his great and holy name, is prepared to run all lengths in vice and immorality. Nothing but certain circumstances can deter him from following any vicious inclination of his heart. Those who deal the most freely in profane oaths and curses, are generally the most vicious and abandoned creatures in the world, and take the most pains and pleasure in contaminating and corrupting all within the sphere of their example and influence. It is an old adage, "Nemo repente turpissimus." That is, no one rises to the height of wickedness suddenly. A child, a youth, or a man, grows vicious gradually. One vice leads to another, and another; and it is by degrees, that the profane swearer becomes entirely vicious. Profaneness is a peculiarly leading vice, and for that reason is to be most carefully and firmly withstood and avoided.

7. Profane swearing is a land-defiling iniquity. It is a moral infection, a spreading leprosy, and more infectious than any natural disease. It is a sin which can be more easily and oftener repeated than any other sin. The profane man can utter his oaths and imprecations every hour in the day, and every day in the week, wherever he is, and wherever he goes, as long as he lives. No other vicious persons can so easily and so often spread their contaminating influence among those with whom they are conversant. One profane parent may spread profaneness through his whole family. One profane man may spread profaneness through a neighborhood. A few profane men may spread profaneness through a town or a city. And profaneness in one city may spread into another, and through a whole nation or country. The practice of profane swearing is the most contaminating, spreading, and demoralizing vice that ever existed; and, on this account, it is the most land-defiling iniquity. Hence says the prophet Jeremiah, "Because of swearing the land mourneth." It is a vice which is easiest and earliest learned by children. They can learn it as easy and as soon as their mother tongue. We are told that the time was, when there was not a profane oath to be heard in New England. But who can now walk through a city, or travel through country towns, without hearing heaven-daring oaths not only from foreigners, but from Americans; not only from veterans in vice, but from little children who appear beautiful, and ami-

able in other respects? Is not this a demonstration of the infectious, contaminating nature of profaneness, and of the infinite importance of shunning this first step to all iniquity?

8. Profane swearing is a sin, which exhibits infallible evidence, that those who are guilty of it are pursuing the broad road which leads to future and endless ruin. Though there may be thousands who are not openly vicious, that may be living and acting under the entire dominion of an unholy heart, yet we have no right to say that they are actually pursuing the path to final ruin; but we have a right to say, that profane swearers are certainly in the broad road to destruction. God himself has characterized them, and we ought to believe that they sustain the character which he has given them. He declares in the text, that he will condemn the profane swearer. "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain: for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain." God here sets a mark upon the profane man, by which it may be known to the world that he is a child of wrath, and actually under a divine sentence of condemnation. And we find the same sentence of divine condemnation repeated by the prophet Zechariah. "Then I turned, and lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold a flying roll. And he said unto me, What seest thou? And I answered, I see a flying roll; the length thereof is twenty cubits, and the breadth thereof ten cubits. Then said he unto me, This is the curse that goeth forth over the face of the whole earth: for every one that stealeth shall be cut off as on this side, according to it; and every one that sweareth shall be cut off as on that side according to it." This is a solemn declaration of God, that the thief and the swearer are under his awful curse, and must eternally perish, if they pursue their present evil course to the end of life. Every swearer has reason to tremble in the view of his tremendous doom, and every one that hears the voice of swearing ought to resolve, that he never will utter a profane oath.

It now remains to apply this serious, practical, personal subject, with fidelity. I remember and you remember the solemn charge which Paul gave to Timothy, and through him to all his successors in the ministry. "I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing, and his kingdom, preach the word; be instant in season, out of season: reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and doctrine." In compliance with this charge, I must not only apply the subject I have been considering, but apply it in such a manner as cannot fail to bring into view such individuals as bear the mark which God has set upon them to denote that they are enemies to him and to all righteousness, pur-

suing the infallible path to endless ruin. I have no occasion to ask whether I shall proceed, or whether I shall forbear. I must proceed to apply the subject directly to all who are most deeply interested in it. And,

1. This subject properly applies to all civil officers of every grade from the highest to the lowest. You are the appointed ministers of God for good to the people, who have clothed you with authority. You have no right to wear the sword in vain, but are under moral, human and divine obligation to be a terror to evil-doers, as well as a praise and encouragement to those that do well. The vice which has been described and condemned, strikes at the foundation of all religion, morality, and the general good of society. It is a land-defiling iniquity, and properly falls under the cognizance of the public guardians of our property, liberty and lives. Let God and religion be contemned and vilified, and of course, profane oaths and imprecations be allowed to pass with impunity, and no civil government can be maintained among any people in the world. Every nation on the face of the earth, who have any form of civil government, find it necessary in the administration of justice, to require witnesses to appeal to the supreme being whom they worship and adore, to sanction their testimony before the civil magistrate, and of course, to punish with severity all perjury when it is discovered. But we know that our own government condemns and punishes all perjury, and blasphemy, and profane swearing, which leads to perjury and blasphemy, and appoints officers to carry into execution the laws against these open, land-defiling vices. And these are the men to whom this subject applies, and calls to fidelity. Be entreated then to be of good courage, and faithfully discharge the difficult and important duty devolved upon you by the laws of God, the laws of the land, and your own solemn vows and engagements. You have the best part of your fellow men in your favor and for your support; all who love God and religion, and the peace and safety of society, desire and pray that you may serve God and your generation faithfully. The laws of God and of the land are in your favor, and afford all the support you need in obedience to them; only renounce that fear of man which bringeth a snare, and make God your fear and dread, and you will find no excuse for unfaithfulness. It will not be a question whether your brethren in office do their duty. You will feel that their neglect, whether in the higher or lower grades of office, cannot justify your neglect, but rather increases your obligation to fidelity. Let this observation have its full weight upon your minds, and it will fortify your weakest side, and remove the most plausible excuse for negligence.

2. This subject applies with peculiar force and pertinency to parents and heads of families. You have the first care, instruction and government of children and youth. You are required and bound to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; to train them up in the way in which they should go; and to restrain them from walking in the ways of their hearts and in the sight of their eyes, which directly tends to ruin them for time and eternity. You know that the Father of spirits has given them rational and immortal souls, which must be happy or miserable for ever. You will be greatly responsible for their conduct in this world, and for their future and eternal state in the world to come. Your paternal feelings, your paternal authority, your paternal knowledge, your paternal opportunity, your paternal circumstances, and your paternal vows, if you have made any, unitedly call upon you to perform a duty which you owe to God, to yourselves, and to your fellow men. All parents and members of society are in duty bound to promote the good of the society to which they belong. And since parental instruction and government lay the first and firmest foundation for religion, morality and public prosperity, parents have a very important public duty to discharge in their private station. The public have a demand upon them to form their children for the public good. This requires them to restrain their children from every vice and immorality which is reproachful to God, and injurious to every human society, and especially from profane language, which is one of the first vices to which they are exposed and addicted. They go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies. This they do to hide, palliate, or excuse, their faults. They never need to be taught to lie, though they often are, by their parents' falsifying their threats and promises. Lying is a vice which spontaneously springs from the native depravity of children. But they have no natural propensity to swearing until they are taught it by precept or example. Some parents, but few I hope, teach their children to use profane words. But if little children happen to hear profane language, they are extremely apt to catch the ungodly dialect, and learn to curse and swear. Time was, as we have observed, when parents could easily prevent their children from hearing a profane word; but times are changed, and men and parents have changed with the times. It is now next to impossible for the most pious and watchful parents to keep their children from hearing profane language. If they send them to their neighbors, they are there exposed. If they send them to school, they are there exposed. If they send them to the house of God, they are there exposed. Or if they allow them to visit their relatives,

they are there exposed. The leprosy has spread into the walls of houses, and corrupted whole families. All that parents can now do, is to use proper antidotes against the spreading poison. In the first place, they ought to shut their lips, and never suffer a profane word to drop from them. This must be done before they can use any other antidote successfully; for it will be in vain to attempt to restrain their children from profaneness if they practice it themselves. In the next place, they must read the Bible from day to day before their families, and teach their children to read it; and especially the ten commandments, the third of which expressly forbids them to take the name of the Lord their God in vain, upon pain of his righteous and everlasting displeasure. In the next place, they must attentively watch their children, and if they ever hear them utter a profane oath, never let it pass without verbal reproof, or more severe correction. They must be made to know that it is not a venial fault, but an enormous crime, which must be restrained by the most powerful and effectual means. In the last place, they must never allow any profane person to reside in their house for service or friendship. Let parents use these antidotes against profane language, and they will seldom fail of preserving their children from taking the name of the Lord their God in vain, so long as they are minors, and under their care, instruction and authority.

3. This subject applies to youth in particular, and reads a seasonable and solemn lecture to you in the morning of life, upon your dangerous situation. You are by nature depraved, and live in a depraved world, and in a degenerate day. You are surrounded by your superiors, your inferiors, and your equals, in age, knowledge, and moral corruption. And you know that many of them have already learned to take the name of the Lord their God in vain. You must be sensible that you are in peculiar danger of being led astray by those who wish to corrupt you. Though many of you have pious parents, who have in a public and solemn manner devoted you to God, instructed, warned, and restrained you from the abounding sin of profaneness, yet you are in great danger of backsliding and breaking over the restraints that have been laid upon you, and are painful to you. For corrupters will aim to increase your uneasiness under parental influence, and inspire you with the vanity to think that it will be manly and noble to throw off a yoke of bondage as early as possible. Lean not to your own understanding, nor trust in your own heart, which is "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." Many a youth, as confident in his own resolution and strength, has been seduced and corrupted. Some of you, perhaps, now

know by your own experience the weakness of your sober resolutions. You may possibly remember the time when you uttered your first profane oath, which struck you with horror; but you have since lost your fear of God and the terror of an oath, and your profane language has become so familiar to you, that you cannot tell when you pour out your oaths and imprecations. If you have lost all fear of God, and are hardy enough to take his name in vain without remorse, your case is deplorable and next to desperate. You cannot be restrained and reformed by human means. You have a habit of profaneness, which is a second nature, and as hard to govern as your corrupt nature. If you have said with the sinners in Zion, "With our tongue will we prevail, our lips are our own, who is lord over us?"—tremble at your presumption, and reflect a moment upon your character and condition. You are under a sentence of condemnation, which God may execute at any moment. You have not yet reached the years of manhood, and what reason have you to hope you ever will? God knows if he should spare your life, and you should continue your course, your mouths will be full of curses, and destruction and misery will be in all your ways. God has said the wicked shall not live out half their days; and who are more wicked than profane swearers, who spread the most fatal infection to all around them, wherever they are? You have already done evil enough. Cease then to do evil, and learn to do well, that your iniquity may not be your ruin.

But I would hope, that some of the youth before me are yet innocent of the great sin of taking the name of the Lord their God in vain. If you are innocent, preserve your innocence. Avoid all language which resembles profaneness, and easily leads to it. Avoid the company, and especially the intimacy of all such as allow themselves in profaneness, and let them know that you disapprove and abhor their mean and low-lived vice. This you may decently and safely do, without assuming the authority of monitors. Never countenance or connive at the profaneness of your equals or inferiors, nor attempt to cover their guilt, or screen them from deserved reproach or punishment. If you hear swearing, God requires you to bear testimony against it. This the express command of God obliges you to do. "If a soul sin, and hear the voice of swearing, and is a witness whether he hath seen or known of it, if he do not utter it, then shall he bear his iniquity." It would be well indeed, if both young and old would constantly remember and obey this command. It would be a very great restraint upon profane swearers in the day of degeneracy. How often, my hearers, are you bound to do your duty in respect to profane swearers!

4. This subject applies with all its force to veterans in the land-defiling vice of profaneness. It requires no critical search to find men of this character; for they freely and openly show themselves, in every town, in every parish, and almost in every neighborhood. You have abused and offended your God. You have injured your country, and caused the land to mourn. You have wounded the feelings of all the friends of piety and virtue. It is more than possible that you have drawn tears from the eyes, and groans from the hearts of kind, tender, and faithful parents. You have taught the rising generation to despise their God and their fathers' God, to set at nought his commands, and disregard all his reproofs. You have done as much as you could to spread vice and irreligion every where. You have been the troublers of our Israel. You are entreated to consider your ways, to review your past lives immediately, and seriously reflect upon the immense guilt you have contracted, and the heavy doom to which you are imminently exposed. Your days will soon be finished, and your eternal state unalterably fixed. The door of mercy now stands open, but it will be soon shut, and never opened again. The mercy of God has no bounds. He saved Manasseh; and if you humble yourselves deeply as he did, and cry for mercy, he will save you at the eleventh hour. To-day then, if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, nor delay to submit to the terms of life.

But there may be a larger class of hearers than any that have been mentioned, who may console themselves with the pleasing thought that they are better than others, and that God will treat them better than he will treat others, because they have never taken his name in vain, nor uttered a profane oath. But have you not committed innumerable other sins, and opposed greater light, resisted stronger remonstrances of conscience, and violated more repeatedly solemn vows and resolutions to obey all the divine commands, than the most abandoned swearers? Have you not often contended with your Maker in your hearts, while you have presumed to bless him with your tongues? This God has told you is an abomination in his sight. You have no reason to boast of your superior goodness, but have abundant reason to judge and condemn yourselves for your numerous and aggravated transgressions; and "except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

SERMON XXXV.

PARENTAL GOVERNMENT OF A FAMILY.

For I know him that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him. — Genesis, xviii. 19.

Abraham was one of the excellent of the earth. He believed in the being and perfections of the true God, and placed an unshaken confidence in him, while his father, and friends, and the world in general, fell into gross idolatry. His faith produced cordial obedience and submission to the will of God. For, by faith, when he was called to go out into a place which he should afterwards receive for an inheritance, he obeyed; and went out, not knowing whither he went. In return, God exercised corresponding love to him, and confidence in him. He condescended to make a new and everlasting covenant with him, and engaged to be his God, and the God of his seed, from generation to generation. After he had formed this intimate and important connection with him, he considered and treated him as his peculiar friend. For when he was about to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah, he said, "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do; seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? For I know him, that he will command his children, and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him." God here expresses full confidence in Abraham, that he would exercise parental authority over his family with pro-

priety and fidelity. This representation of Abraham naturally leads us to consider,

I. Who they are that compose a family.

II. What is implied in exercising parental authority over a family. And,

III. The importance of exercising parental authority over a family.

I. We are to consider, who they are that compose a family. Some families are smaller, and some are larger than others. Families are usually composed of parents and their children, which are sometimes less, and sometimes more numerous. But parents may have other children and youths committed to their care and instruction, and those equally belong to their family. Besides their own and other children, they may have those whom they employ in their service, and who reside in their house; and these all belong to their family. They may also have some persons whom they invite to reside with them gratuitously. These likewise belong to the family. In a word, all whom they permit to enter under their roof for pleasure, entertainment, protection, or relief, belong to their family for the time being. Parents are heads of their families, whether larger or smaller, and whether they are composed of persons of different ages, characters and conditions, or not. Their parental authority extends to every individual of their family. Abraham had a very numerous family, composed of persons of various ages, characters and conditions. He had six sons beside Ishmael and Isaac. He had three hundred servants born in his house, and some that he bought with his money. Over all these he exercised paternal authority. For we read, "In the self-same day was Abraham circumcised, and Ishmael his son, and all the men of his house, born in the house, and bought with money of the stranger, were circumcised with him." All parents, or heads of families have the same parental authority over their children and households that Abraham had. Parental authority is founded in the nature of things, and discoverable by the light of nature. The natural dependence of children upon their parents, gives their parents a natural right to govern them so long as that dependence continues; and children early see and feel the propriety and obligation of submitting to such parental authority. Parental authority is as fully and universally claimed by parents, and acknowledged by children, among heathens as among christians. All heathen parents, whether civilized or savage, are capable of seeing that they ought to govern their children and households; and their children and households are capable of seeing that they ought to submit to their government. And this parental authority,

which is founded in the nature of things, is sanctioned by divine authority. God commands parents to govern, and children and households to obey. Parents are bound to their children, and their children are bound to them. Their mutual relations create mutual obligations, which are mutually binding, and cannot be violated on either side without incurring great guilt. The origin, the nature and the obligation of parental authority all show how far it extends, and how long it continues. It extends to all that belong to a family or household, and it continues to bind them so long as it can be of service to them, or so long as the civil law allows it to bind them. The law of nature, the law of God, and the civil law, generally agree in this, to allow parents to exercise their parental authority over their children and households, until their age, their knowledge and circumstances render them capable of self-direction, which may be at various periods of life. Having considered who they are that compose a family or household, over whom parental authority is to be exercised, I proceed to consider,

II. What is implied in parental authority, or what it gives parents a right to do in respect to their children and households. And here it may be observed,

1. That it gives them the right of dedicating them to God. Abraham possessed and exercised this right. "When Abram was ninety years old and nine, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect. And I will make my covenant between me and thee. Thou shalt keep my covenant, therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee, in their generations. This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you, and thy seed after thee; every man-child among you shall be circumcised. And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you. And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man-child in your generations: he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which is not of thy seed. He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised." Agreeably to this divine command, Abraham exercised his parental authority over all his children and numerous households, whether born in his house or purchased with his money, and caused them the same day to be circumcised. This was a solemn dedication of them to God, by a solemn ceremony. Though the rite of circumcision be abolished, yet parents still have authority to dedicate their children and households to God, by the right of baptism. Parents have the same right to devote themselves, their children and their households to God, under the gospel, that Abraham had

to devote himself, his children, and his household to God, before the gospel day. Accordingly, we read, that Lydia and her household, and the jailer and all his were baptized. And household baptism has been practiced in the christian church ever since. One thing therefore, implied in parental authority, is a right in parents to devote their children and households to God, by baptism.

2. Parental authority gives parents the right of instructing their children, as well as the right of devoting them to God. This right God says he knew Abraham would exercise, in commanding his children and his household after him, that they should keep the way of the Lord to do justice and judgment. He had before this obeyed the divine command to devote his children and household to God, by which he had bound himself to teach them their duty to remember their Creator and pay a universal obedience to all his precepts and prohibitions. We may be sure, therefore, that he did not neglect to employ his authority, his knowledge, his wisdom and his fidelity, in bringing up his children and household in the knowledge and fear of the Lord. Moses enjoined the same duty upon the parents in Israel. He said unto them, " Hear, O Israel, The Lord our God is one Lord. And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart. And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shall talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." Solomon inculcates the same duty upon parents. " Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." And the apostle exhorts parents to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Mankind are born like the wild ass's colt, ignorant of God and divine things, and unwilling to learn their duty to God and man. It is, therefore, the proper right and business of parents to instruct their children and all under their care, in the duties of piety, morality, and of every thing decent and amiable in the sight of God and man. Their parental authority obliges them to use all the means in their power, both by instruction and example, to form their children and households to virtue, piety and usefulness. It must be farther observed,

3. That parental authority gives parents a right to restrain, as well as to instruct their children and households. Children and youth are naturally inclined to vanity and vice, from which they need to be guarded and restrained, not only by instruction, admonition and advice, but by proper authority. It is the duty

of parents to command, as well as to instruct and reprove. God knew that Abraham would have occasion to command his children and household; and that he would command with authority and effect. A right to command always implies a power and right to enforce obedience. A command always implies a penalty of some kind or other, in case of disobedience. A parental precept, like every other lawful precept, always contains a penalty either expressed or understood. And parents always have the same right to inflict a just penalty, as to give a just precept or command. The Bible, which gives parents authority over their children and households, allows and even requires them to exercise that authority, both by precept and penalty. Solomon says "Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction will drive it far from him." Again he says, "Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying." Again he says, "Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell." Again he says, "Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest; yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul." It is not, indeed, always necessary, nor even proper, for the parents to correct by the rod. There are many other ways in which they may express displeasure towards any of their froward children and household, which is the proper design of all punishment. To deny or take away a darling object, may serve the same purpose as the rod. Or, on greater occasions, to deny some peculiar favor or privilege, may be a sufficient restraint. But in some way or other, parents are bound to restrain their children and household from every evil practice, or sinful course. When instruction, warning and admonition fail to restrain them, they must use more powerful and coercive means, which are sufficient to produce the desired effect. Though Eli used the milder means to govern his family, and restrain them from evil, which proved ineffectual, yet God blamed him for neglecting to exercise the power he had to restrain them effectually. As all parents have authority to command and to punish all under their government, so God will require it at their hands, if they neglect to instruct and restrain their children and households. It now remains to show,

III. The importance of exercising parental authority.

This will appear, if we consider the great and happy consequences, which family government tends to promote.

1. Family government directly tends to promote family religion. This is plainly intimated in the text. God foresaw that Abraham's children and household would keep the way of the

Lord, and do justice and judgment, that is, become pious, virtuous, and useful, because he would properly command, instruct and restrain them; or in other words, give them a pious and religious education. Accordingly, we find that family religion was the happy effect of his wise and faithful family government. His children and household were truly religious. He instructed, governed and restrained Ishmael until he was thirteen years old, and then devoted him to God, by the rite of circumcision. Though after this, Ishmael conducted ill, which constrained Abraham to command him to leave his house; yet he did not cease to love and pray for him, with tender paternal affection. He said unto God, "O that Ishmael might live before thee." This prayer was undoubtedly heard and answered; so that we have just ground to believe that Ishmael was a good man. And we know that Isaac was. Whether all his household were pious, we are not told. But one of his servants, whom he sent to Laban upon an important errand, appears to have been not only faithful, but truly pious. It was Abraham's primary object in the government of his numerous family to promote their piety; and he employed the most proper means to obtain the important end he had in view. He walked before God with a perfect heart. He devoted his children and household to God according to his own institution. He employed his parental authority in teaching and restraining all under his command. And he had the great satisfaction to see his children and household keeping the ways of the Lord, doing justice and judgment, and becoming useful and happy in the world. Other pious parents have pursued the same method, and employed the same means to promote family religion, and happily succeeded. The pious parents of Samuel gave him a pious education, which appears to have been the means of his eminent piety and usefulness. Zacharias and Elisabeth were both righteous, and walked in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. They dedicated their son John to the Lord in the way he had appointed, they instructed and restrained him, and instrumentally qualified him to prepare the way for the coming of Christ, and the commencement of the gospel dispensation. There is nothing that has a greater tendency to promote family religion, than the proper exercise of parental authority in respect to the dedication, instruction and restraint of children and households. If parents neglect to exercise their rightful authority over their families, they will find it morally impossible to instruct and restrain them properly. Where can you find an instance of family religion, where family government is neglected? It is true, there were saints

in Cæsar's household, and there may be pious individuals where parental authority is not properly exercised; but these are rare instances. Nevertheless, it is the natural tendency of family government to promote family religion. Whenever we find religious parents, who give up their children and households to God, and instruct, and restrain them; there we generally find vital piety to prevail more or less, and those under their care early devoting themselves to God, and walking with the wise in the ways of wisdom, righteousness and peace. The proper exercise of parental authority is, therefore, very important, as it directly tends to promote family religion.

2. The proper exercise of parental authority is highly important, as it tends to propagate religion from generation to generation, throughout the world. This God mentions as the great and happy effect of Abraham's fidelity in exercising his parental authority over his family and household. "And the Lord said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do; seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? For I know him, that he will command his children, and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him;" which was, that in him all the nations of the earth should be blessed, in consequence of his propagating religion through the world. By Abraham's commanding his children and his household to keep the way of the Lord, he propagated religion in the family of Isaac. Isaac propagated religion in the family of Jacob. Jacob propagated religion in the families of his twelve sons. They propagated religion until their posterity became a great and mighty nation. That great and mighty nation propagated religion from the time they took possession of Canaan, till the coming of Christ. And the twelve apostles, who were of the seed of Abraham, propagated religion in all nations until this day, and will be the instruments of propagating it to the end of the world. God always has propagated, and always will propagate religion from family to family, by the instrumentality of pious parents, who devote their children and household to him, and properly exercise their parental authority over them, by precept, example and restraint. You can now find but a very few pious parents, who were not born, devoted to God in infancy, and educated, under the proper exercise of parental authority. We every where see religion generally flowing from family to family, by means of family government. It is greatly owing to family government, that children and youth read the Bible, observe the Sabbath, and attend public worship,

and those means of instruction which God usually blesses to the conviction, conversion, and salvation of sinners. What then can be of greater importance than the proper exercise of parental authority, and family government? It is no less important than the propagation of religion, from generation to generation, through the world to the end of time; and this is no less important than the salvation of myriads and myriads of mankind, whom God has given to his Son. It appears from common observation, that when family government declines, religion declines with it from family to family, who become more and more irreligious. It is of infinite importance that these fatal consequences should be prevented, and according to the common course of things, nothing but the revival of family government will prevent such a declension of religion. Whether you look backward, or look forward; whether you look into your own or other families; you cannot help seeing the vast importance of family government, which is the mighty means of instructing, restraining, and converting mankind. These observations will not become less, but more weighty, the more seriously and attentively you consider the worth of your own souls, and of the souls of your descendants, from generation to generation, to the end of time. Whether family government be maintained, or neglected, it cannot fail of producing infinitely important consequences, with respect to all the families of the earth. Farthermore,

3. The proper exercise of parental authority directly tends to promote both temporal and spiritual prosperity. It produced both these great and happy effects upon Abraham and his posterity. Abraham was rich. Isaac was rich. Jacob was rich. And the whole Jewish nation were rich, while they remained in the land given to their fathers; and individuals still continue to be proverbially rich. There never was a more prosperous nation than the Jews, for nearly two thousand years. Their flocks and herds were extremely numerous, and their land brought forth by handfuls. These temporal blessings God bestowed upon them, out of respect to the piety and faithfulness of their father Abraham, and their other pious and faithful parents. But these were only minor favors. God granted them a rich profusion of spiritual and divine blessings. He circumcised their hearts to love the Lord their God supremely, to walk in his ways, and to promote his glory. There never was before, nor has there been since, a more religious people than the seed of Abraham, whom God chose for his own peculiar people. In the days of Joshua and the elders that outlived Joshua, and in the days of David, Solomon, and other pious princes, pure religion greatly flourished and prevailed.

And though there were some general declensions from time to time, yet they continued the only nation in the world that maintained the true religion until the gospel day. It was owing to the proper exercise of parental authority, that these infinitely rich spiritual blessings were transmitted from Abraham down to Zacharias and Elisabeth, who walked in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless, and by the proper exercise of their parental authority, trained up their only son to be the most eminently pious and extensively useful man so long as he lived. Though all the temporal and spiritual blessings of Abraham do not come upon his spiritual children, yet those who walk in the steps of their father Abraham, have ground to expect similar tokens of the divine favor. Similar causes produce similar effects. There is a natural and constituted connection between the piety of parents and the piety of their families; and there is a natural and constituted connection between the piety of families, and their temporal and spiritual peace, harmony and prosperity. Let parents, at this day, employ the same means that Abraham did to promote the peace, harmony and prosperity of his family, and they may hope to receive similar expressions of the divine love and approbation. "For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." Though God may sometimes frown upon those who properly exercise parental authority, and upon those who enjoy the benefit of it, yet all things may eventually work together for their good. So that it still remains a general truth, that the proper exercise of parental authority is infinitely important, as it tends to draw down the richest temporal and spiritual blessings on individual persons, private families, larger communities, and whole nations and kingdoms. The faithful exercise of parental authority stands connected with the best blessings that God can bestow, and men can receive, in this world.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. If it be so important, as has been said, that parents should properly exercise parental authority over their children and households, then it is highly important that they themselves should be pious. It is really important that children and youth should be pious, in order to escape the evils and dangers to which they are exposed in their early and inexperienced age, and in order to glorify God, and enjoy the hopes and consolations of the gospel. But it is much more important that those who have come upon the stage of life, and are placed at the

head of a family, should exercise that love to God, which is the fulfilling of the law, and prepares them for the discharge of every important duty devolved upon them. They cannot walk within their house with propriety, nor properly perform their duty to those who are under their care, instruction, and government, before they cordially and unreservedly give up themselves to God, and resolve to live to him and not to themselves. Nothing short of vital piety can enable and dispose parents to discharge the great and self-denying duties which they owe to their children and households. They must first give themselves to the Lord, before they can give their children and households to him. They must first walk in the ways of the Lord, before they can consistently and sincerely command their children and households to walk in his ways, and to avoid every evil and false way. Young people have reason to tremble at the prospect of entering into a family state, before they are prepared to fulfil the weighty duties which will result from it. Parents are solemnly responsible to God for their conduct towards their children and households, whose temporal and spiritual interests are, for a while, suspended upon their treatment of them. If they faithfully perform the parental duties, they may be the means of promoting their temporal and eternal good; but if they are negligent and unfaithful, they may be the means of their temporal and eternal wretchedness. Those children and households are in a deplorable condition, whose parents, or masters, or mistresses are destitute of vital piety, and totally neglect to watch over, instruct, restrain, and govern those, whom God has committed to their trust. But are not such unhappy parents and children every where to be seen? It deeply concerns impenitent, unbelieving, and unfaithful parents to reflect upon their own guilty character and wretched condition, and upon the unhappy and dangerous state of their children and households, who may perish through their neglect, and whose blood, in that case, will be required at their hands. It is painful to think of the rising and numerous families here, who have no pious parents, or parent, to devote them to God, to instruct them in duty, or to restrain them from walking with the wicked in the broad and smooth path to destruction; nor to carry them to the throne of divine grace. Can you endure the thought of teaching your children to treat you with ingratitude and disrespect in this world, and with bitter reproach in another world? If not, reform yourselves, that you may reform your children and households, and that you both may escape the wrath to come.

2. If it be so important that parents should duly exercise their parental authority over their children and households, as

has been said, then they are entirely inexcusable and guilty, if they neglect to do it. There is no duty, perhaps, among those who call themselves christians, and among those who are real christians, so much neglected as the duty of commanding their children and households to keep the way of the Lord. Parents are generally disposed to give their children and households a common education, and often to give some of them a liberal education; but there are only a very few, if any, that are sufficiently disposed to give them a good religious education. In this respect, parents are extremely apt to be too negligent and unfaithful. You may find a great many parents who spare no time nor expense to adorn the bodies of their children, to cultivate their understanding, to polish their manners, and to provide a rich inheritance for them, while they greatly neglect to instruct them in duty, to restrain them from vanity, folly and vice, and to impress their minds with a deep sense of their moral and indispensable obligations to remember their Creator, and obey his commands, in the days of their youth. But these very parents will not presume to deny, that it is their first and most important duty, to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Why then do they neglect this plain, important and acknowledged duty? Is there not a cause? And is not this the cause of their guilty negligence, — that they wish to be excused from the discharge of such a painful and self-denying duty? This leads them to devise a great many ways to palliate, extenuate, or entirely to excuse their neglect. But can they find any excuse, which will meet the approbation of God, or the approbation of their own conscience? Let us examine some of the excuses, which they often make.

They sometimes plead, that they are not capable of giving them religious instruction. But do they not view themselves capable of giving them other instructions? Do they not actually exercise their knowledge, their right and authority, to direct and command them in respect to their secular concerns? Why then are they not capable of teaching them to obey God as well as to obey themselves; to do their duty on the Sabbath as well as on any other day of the week; to take care of their souls as well as to take care of their bodies; to prepare for dying as well as to prepare for living? Their own conscience will not excuse them for not teaching their children all that they do know about the doctrines and duties of religion.

Some plead, that they cannot find time to give their children and household religious instruction. But do they not find time to do what they most desire to do, or what they believe to be of the most importance to do? Abraham found time to com-

mand his children and numerous household to keep the way of the Lord. Hannah found time to give religious instruction to her son Samuel. The mother and grand-mother of Timothy found time to give him religious instruction. And there are still here and there pious parents, who find time to pour religious instruction into the young and tender minds of their children. It is absurd, therefore, for any to plead the want of time, as an excuse for not giving their children line upon line, and precept upon precept, in respect to the duties of virtue and piety.

Some think it is not wise and prudent to exercise their parental authority, to make their children and households do what they are very loath to do, or to restrain them from doing what they ardently desire to do. They are afraid of constraining and restraining their children and household too much. They think it will not do to command them to read the Bible, or to attend family prayers, or to attend catechisings, or to attend public worship. Nor, on the other hand, will it do to restrain them absolutely, from visiting on the Sabbath from house to house, nor from attending balls, playing cards, and joining in other supposed innocent diversions and amusements. But why should parents have any authority over their families, if they may not exercise it in controlling their conduct? God, who has given them their authority, requires them to exercise it; and they feel no hesitation to command, forbid and restrain authoritatively, in regard to every thing but religion, which is infinitely more important to themselves and to their children, than any thing and every thing else. This excuse will be of no avail in the sight of God, nor, sooner or later, in the view of their own conscience.

But they often make another, and they imagine a more plausible excuse for their neglect. They plead that others, and such as they view wiser and better than themselves, do not exercise their parental authority with respect to the moral and religious conduct of their children and households, and therefore, they cannot command and control them in respect to such things as are highly esteemed among men, though they know they are an abomination in the sight of God. And if they could control them in such things, it would be an injury to them, to be more strict and rigid than other parents. It would spoil their characters, and totally prevent their appearing with reputation and making their way in the world, which is too great self-denial for them to exercise, and for their children to endure. There would be a great weight in this excuse, if they and their children were designed to live only for time, and not for eternity. Let them, therefore, only view themselves in the light of eternity, and this excuse will entirely vanish. In a word, it is vain, and worse than vain, to devise and cherish any excuse for dis-

obeying God, and betraying the eternal interests of those committed to their watch, and care, and government.

3. If the proper exercise of parental authority be so important as has been said, in order to promote and perpetuate religion, then we may discover the primary cause of the declension of religion in any place where it has prevailed and flourished. It must be primarily and principally owing to the neglect of parents in exercising their parental authority over their children and households. While parents faithfully follow the example of faithful Abraham, they seldom fail of promoting and preserving religion in their own families. And family religion generally spreads from one family to another in a continued, a long, if not a perpetual line of succession. It was owing, as we have seen, to pious, private, parental education, that the spirit and cause of true religion were transmitted, from family to family, through the long period from Abraham to Christ. And it has been transmitted, through the same channel, from Christ to this day. It is evident, therefore, that when this cause becomes languid, in one place or another, religion will, in the same degree, languish and decline. The declension of religion most generally begins in families. Is not this confirmed by universal observation? Look into any place where family government is neglected, and will you not find that religion is declining and languishing in that place? Look into this place in particular. Many of you can recollect the piety and faithfulness of your fathers, in instructing, warning, admonishing and restraining you, and the order and regularity which were the happy effects which followed. Do you now discover the same things in your own, or other families? Can you doubt the cause? Has not family government declined, and religion declined with it? Do the third or fourth generation maintain that family government which the first maintained? Do you discover much religion among the children, or youth, or the young and rising families? Can you not easily trace this melancholy effect to the neglect or decline of the faithful exercise of parental authority? The decline of religion never fails to follow the decline of family government. Irreligious families are the nurseries of impiety and irreligion. When parents cast off fear, and restrain prayer before God, and their children, and households, it is to be expected that they will grow up ignorant, stupid, impenitent, and irreligious. Parents of this character are fast multiplying here; and do we not here see the melancholy fruits and effects of their great and inexcusable negligence?

4. If the proper exercise of parental authority be so important, as has been said, to promote and perpetuate religion, then

we may discover the primary cause of the prevalence of religious errors at this day in this land. A few years ago, either infidelity, or gross and fatal errors, were scarcely any where to be found. The great and fundamental doctrines of the gospel were generally taught, believed, and professed. But of late, a host of sectarians and a flood of fatal errors have spread almost every where. These dire effects are, undoubtedly, primarily and principally owing to the neglect of parents, in not giving their children and households that religious instruction which was given to them, and which they ought to have given to those under their watch and care. The general practice of parents and others of teaching children and youth the Assembly's Catechism continued, for many years, almost a complete barrier against the spread of dangerous and fatal errors in respect to the essential doctrines and duties of christianity. But since this excellent system of divine truths has been so much laid aside in families and schools, a torrent of fatal errors has come in, and threatened to bear down all before it. How many parents are there, who not only neglect to teach their children and households the catechism, but object against its being taught, and the Bible's being read in the school? Is it strange then, that truth is fallen in our streets, and that error so triumphantly prevails almost every where? Mankind naturally love error and hate religious truth. This was strikingly verified in the days of Jeroboam, who led away ten tribes out of twelve, to forsake the house and worship of the true God, to bow down and worship dumb idols. As soon as God called Abraham out of Ur of the Chaldees, he gave up all nations to idolatry; for there was not a man left to restrain them from their beloved error. And the only way by which any were preserved from falling into the same error, was by the faith and faithfulness of Abraham. And if any thing by the way of external means can suppress and restrain the progress of error, it must be the faithful exercise of parental authority, example, and instruction. This will strike at the fountain-head of the numerous streams of error which threaten to overwhelm the land.

5. We learn from this subject, to whom it primarily and principally belongs to bring about a reformation in piety and virtue. It certainly belongs to parents in particular. And is there a pious or sober parent, who will not acknowledge that a reformation is necessary? There is no occasion to look into the state of particular families, in order to see that parental authority is not generally and duly exercised. We learn the neglect of performing that great duty, by the visible effects of the neglect in the rising generation and rising families. Is

there any fashionable and sinful amusement, error, or vice, which children and youth and rising families are not running into? And should there not be a reformation? But to whom can we look to bring it about? Is it reasonable to look to the young, who are joyfully swimming down the current of corruption? Can it be expected that they will reform themselves? It cannot. Must we not then look to the aged and the heads of families to reform the young, the unsuspicious and unguarded? The cause of virtue and religion is now lodged in the hands of the pious and virtuous few, to defend, promote and perpetuate the infinitely important interests of vital piety and christian morality. If you now ask, what must we do? the answer is easy. Be faithful to yourselves, and to your children and households. I might venture to say, do as your fathers did to you. You do not want for numbers, for information, nor for influence? The wicked always did and always must bow before the good. You have most of you vowed to the Lord, with respect to your children and households, and you may not go back. What if it be painful and self-denying to do your duty? Have you not solemnly engaged to do it? Did you expect, when you engaged to live a christian life, that you could live such a life without self-denial? And what have you to lose, in comparison with what you have to gain for yourselves and households? You may lose the love and applause of some, but not the good opinion of any. All men have consciences, which approve of right conduct in themselves and others. Let every one then this day make and keep the same good resolution that Joshua made: "As for me, and my house, we will serve the Lord."

SERMON XXXVI.

PIETY A PECULIAR ORNAMENT TO THE AGED.

THE hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness. PROV. x. 31.

THIS is a wise saying of the wise man, which has no particular connection with what is said before it or what is said after it. It needs no comments, for it is a plain declaration of a plain important truth:

That piety is a peculiar ornament to old people.

It is proposed to consider,

I. Who may properly be called old people.

II. What is to be understood by their piety. And,

III. In what respects their piety is their peculiar ornament.

I. We are to consider who may properly be called old people. This is a phrase to which common use has affixed no definite meaning. Old and young are relative terms, and may admit of different significations. We often speak of some as young, of some as younger, and of some as youngest. And on the contrary, we often speak of the old, the older, and the oldest. Children always think their parents are old. Some think men may be called old at forty, or fifty, or sixty, and it is generally, if not universally thought that those are really old who have arrived at seventy, and above seventy years of age. There seems to be no impropriety however in calling any man old rather than young, who has passed the meridian of life, which is commonly supposed to be at about forty-five. The scripture represents those as old, who have gray hairs here and there upon them. David considered this as a mark of his old age. "Now when I am old and gray headed, O God, forsake me not." The distinction in ages has always been considered as

an important distinction by all mankind, who have marked it by some peculiar symptoms or visible effects which the different periods of life produce on the body or mind. The young are fond of the distinction between them and the old; and though the old cannot deny the distinction, yet they generally regret it. But it ought to be realized by both the young and the old; for God has made it the ground of different precepts and prohibitions in his word. He requires that of the young which he does not require of the old, and requires that of the old which he does not of the young. Though God has mentioned three-score years and ten as the common boundary of life, yet he has no where mentioned any particular period in life when a person ceases to be young, and begins to be old. He leaves it to every individual to judge for himself when the precepts to the young bind him, and when the precepts to the old bind him. It is a matter of serious importance therefore, that every one should judge justly, with respect to his being old or young. We are not to determine whether we are young, or whether we are old, by what others think or say of us, but by what we know of ourselves respecting this distinct period of our lives, which God has distinguished, and which he regards. None can either read or hear the word of God properly and profitably without numbering their days aright, and realizing whether they are in the morning, in the meridian, or decline of life. How many have been startled the first time they heard themselves called old, or the first time they realized themselves to be so! This discourse is designed for the aged, and it seems necessary that all who stand in that rank should know that it speaks to them in particular. Let us now consider,

II. What is to be understood by the piety of old people, which is their peculiar ornament, or crown of glory. It is called their righteousness in the text. Righteousness is often used in Scripture to denote holiness in heart and life, in distinction from every thing that is unholy in heart and life. When any are renewed in the spirit of their mind, they are said "to put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." Righteousness is true holiness, which is the moral excellence of all moral beings, and the essence of all vital piety in mankind. The piety of old people implies two things. And,

1. It implies their cordial belief in the great truths of the gospel. None can truly embrace the gospel without cordially believing the peculiar and essential doctrines or principles upon which it is founded. Men, in order to be saved, must believe what the gospel teaches concerning God, concerning Christ,

concerning themselves, and concerning the future state of rewards and punishments. They must believe the existence, the perfections, the government, and the purposes of God. They must believe that God is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him; that his laws are holy, just, and good; that he reigns in righteousness, and disposes of all his works and creatures in perfect wisdom, justice and goodness; and that he will finally promote the highest holiness and happiness of the universe, by punishing the wicked and rewarding the righteous in the future state. They must believe that the Lord Jesus Christ is both "God and man in two distinct natures, and one person for ever;" that he has suffered and died to make atonement for the sins of the world; that they have sinned, and deserve the curse of the law which they have broken; that they must renounce all self-righteousness and self-dependence, and rely alone on the atonement of Christ for pardon and acceptance in the sight of God; and that it is only by perseverance in faith, repentance and obedience, that they can reach the kingdom of heaven; while all the finally impenitent and unbelieving will be cast off for ever. All true piety is founded on the knowledge, the belief, and the love of the great and peculiar truths of the gospel. Nor is this all, for,

2. The piety of old people implies the practice of the duties, as well as the belief of the doctrines, of the gospel. It seems to be suggested in the text, that old righteous persons have lived not only a long, but a righteous life. "The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness." It is generally true, though there may be some exceptions, that aged christians have lived a long time in the way of holiness and obedience to the divine commands. The promises of the gospel are expressly made to those who overcome, to those who continue in well-doing, and to those who endure unto the end. The piety of the aged is aged piety, and productive of the fruits of righteousness. Internal piety always produces external obedience to the precepts of the gospel. Though the oldest christians never arrive at sinless perfection in this life, yet they generally grow in grace as they grow in years, and become more and more satisfied with being reconciled to dying, and desirous of being absent from the body, and present with the Lord. It is to be expected, that aged saints will be found in the way of righteousness, and living under the happy influence of the great and precious promises which God has given them. "The righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree; he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Those that be planted

in the house of the Lord, shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing: to show that the Lord is upright." Though the piety of the young and that of the old are essentially alike, yet the piety of the aged has a specific and superior excellence.

It now remains to consider,

III. In what respects their piety is their peculiar ornament. Piety adorns the hoary head, and spreads a peculiar beauty over the aged. This is the universal opinion of mankind. Those who look upon piety as a blemish in the morning or meridian of life, admire it as a beauty in old age. Who ever saw a poor man of piety, suffering the decays of nature, and the infirmities of old age, that did not say to himself, that his piety, in his situation, was proper, was necessary, and truly amiable. Who ever saw a rich man of piety, bowing under the weight of years, leaning on his staff, or lying on a bed of sickness and death, and just ready to leave all his possessions and honors, that did not say to himself, I had rather possess that man's piety, than all the wealth and earthly enjoyments which he is leaving behind him. How much soever piety may be despised in the young, the rich and the great, in the early stages of life, yet it always appears to be a crown of glory in those who are in the vale of years, and on the borders of eternity. It is a peculiar beauty and ornament to old people, in various respects. For,

1. Their piety appears with peculiar purity. They have been thrown into the furnace of affliction, and experienced many fiery trials, which were designed to purge them from their dross and tin. They have been made to distinguish between nature and grace, which were often blended together in their early piety. They have learned the wide difference between natural and spiritual affections, and discovered their great leanness and imperfection in holiness, which has clothed them with humility, the brightest feature in the christian character. They have been taught to keep their hearts as well as their lives, with all diligence. They have become better acquainted with God, with themselves, and with the world. They have found the folly and danger of leaning to their own understanding, and trusting in their own heart. They more habitually acknowledge God in all their ways, and seek to him for continual guidance and assistance in duty. They are in some measure cured of their natural and spiritual pride. They were once proud of their piety, and wished to be esteemed as the excellent of the earth. Nor were they merely proud of their piety, but of their superiority. Instead of esteeming others better than themselves, they esteemed themselves better than others, which was spiritual pride. But

when they are become aged, they think more soberly of themselves, and as they ought to think, and walk softly before God; which exhibits their piety in a more pure and amiable light. The purified piety of Peter, of Paul, and especially of John, who outlived all the other apostles, shone with peculiar lustre in the close of life. Abraham appears better after he was tried, than he did before. Jacob appears vastly better after he was tried than he did before. His sons appear vastly better after they were tried than they did before. The piety of David Brainerd grew more pure and beautiful, as he drew nearer and nearer to the grave. Aged piety is tried, purified, refined piety, and spreads a peculiar glory over those who have gone through the storms and tempests of life, spent their days in the service of God, and are waiting for their appointed change.

2. Piety is a peculiar ornament to old people, because it hides the infirmities and imperfections, which are peculiar to their age. Old age is usually attended with so many infirmities of body and mind, that it exhibits a spectacle from which every body turns away his eyes with pain, or disgust. You can hardly bear to see a man, with whom you have been acquainted in his better days, after he has lost his bodily activity, his hearing, his seeing, his memory, and all his sociability. These are the usual effects and consequences of old age, in a greater or less degree; and they are certainly great corporeal and mental imperfections, which need something to cover them. But there is nothing that can cover these imperfections, but vital piety, which aged christians often retain after their bodily and intellectual powers are much impaired. This was the case of the apostle John. He lived until he became very feeble in body and mind, but he retained his spirit of piety, which rendered him peculiarly amiable and venerable. When he could do no more, he used to sit in the chair and say, "little children, love one another." Who could see, or despise his decays of nature, which were adorned with the beauties of holiness? How amiable does piety render aged parents in the eyes of their dutiful children! How amiable does piety render any aged, feeble christian, not only in the view of his friends and acquaintance, but of all who witness his pious appearance, and hear his pious language! How many aged christians lose their bodily activity, while their mental abilities are but very little impaired, and their growth in grace is increased! In such cases, they often become more amiable than they were in their full vigor and activity. Their piety shines with peculiar lustre, and hides, and more than hides, the imbecility of body and mind, though continually increasing to the day of their death. Their declining path is like the declining sun, which sends forth less heat,

but exhibits more brightness, until it sinks below the horizon. As the beams of the setting sun appear more mild and pleasant, than its meridian rays, so every body loves to see piety in the aged, notwithstanding all their other imperfections, more than in those in whom it is rather obscured by natural excellences.

3. Piety is a peculiar ornament to old people, because it renders them useful, when they would otherwise be useless and burdensome to the world. Those who are destitute of piety, when they become old, infirm, decrepid and incapable of pursuing any useful employment, seem to serve no other valuable purpose than to be the passive instruments of admonishing others of their frailty and mortality, and of the guilt and danger of living and dying hopeless and wretched. But piety renders men useful after their laboring days are over, and they are gradually sinking under the decays of nature and the usual infirmities of old age. They are still capable of serving God and their generation, by their examples, their instructions, their admonitions, and their prayers for the friends and for the enemies of God. Though Simeon had lived to old age, and had long waited for the consolation of Israel, and his own departure out of the world, yet he was eminently useful as long as he lived. And though Anna the prophetess had lived to the great age of four-score and four years, yet she departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day. Though Joshua and Caleb were probably very much worn down, by their labors, fatigues, and sufferings, during their long journey through the wilderness, yet they continued to be extensively useful, for many years after they arrived in Canaan, in governing, instructing and restraining the people of God. They served the Lord, and were the means of the people's serving the Lord, as long as they lived. Piety made Barzillai and Jehoiada signally useful, through a long life to the day of their death. Piety had the same happy influence on Paul and John in their old age, who continued eminently useful, till death put a period to their services and sufferings. How many hoary heads are now to be found in the way of righteousness, and crowned with glory! Are there not many old disciples, bringing forth the fruits of righteousness, to be found in our churches at the present day? Are there not many gray-headed pious parents walking in the way of righteousness and with a perfect heart, usefully instructing their children and households, to keep the way of the Lord? The pious examples and instructions of aged parents, are often tenfold more valuable to their families, than all the wealth and respectability they can bestow upon them. Piety renders old people useful, not only to their families and friends, but to the world. They are visible monuments of

sovereign grace, and show, as the Psalmist says, that the Lord is righteous; that is, faithful to his promises, in carrying his friends even to old age, and supporting and comforting them, when the world and the things of the world can no longer satisfy their desires, or alleviate their burdens. Old people walking in the way of righteousness, and rejoicing in God, exhibit a spectacle tenfold more beautiful and instructive, than the young, the rich and the grand exhibit, while rolling in their carriages and rejoicing in their vanity. That piety, which renders old people useful and valuable, gives them a crown of glory, superior to any crown that the graceless, useless, and worthless, can put on. Piety in old people especially, gives a beauty to their persons, when all exterior ornaments are faded and gone. I may add,

4. That piety is a peculiar ornament to old people, because it makes them happy in themselves, and pleasant to others. Old age usually draws after it, not only a train of outward infirmities, troubles, and afflictions, but various species of inward and moral disorders, which are more grievous to bear. Human nature is differently affected, and puts on different appearances in the different stages of life. In the early stages of life, men are naturally joyful, cheerful, and pleased with the scenes they are passing through, with the objects with which they are surrounded, with those with whom they are conversant, with the enjoyments they possess, and the promising prospects before them. But when they begin to decline in life, and arrive at old age, their views and feelings in respect to the men of the world, and the things of the world, are greatly and sensibly altered. Instead of being joyful, they are sorrowful; instead of being cheerful they are melancholy; instead of being pleased with every thing, they are displeased and disgusted with every thing; and instead of seeing promising prospects before them, they see nothing but accumulating evils, disappointments, and wretchedness. Their spirits sink, their resolutions fail, they become querulous, murmur at God, and complain of every body and of every thing. There are thousands of such discontented, unhappy old people, who are destitute of the comforts and supports of religion. But piety makes old people happy in themselves, and pleasant to others. Their love to God and man, their faith, their hope, their patience, their submission, and their meekness, cure or restrain the moral disorders and imperfections, which are peculiar to old age, and render them happy in themselves, and happy to others. What a pleasure do dutiful children take in attending, assisting, and gratifying the desires of their pious, patient, peaceable parents. Who would not have been willing to take care of Barzillai, or Simeon, in their old age? It is true, dutiful children will not fail

to treat their parents with respect and tenderness, though strangers to piety, and subject to the various moral disorders, as well as the natural infirmities of unrenewed human nature, which are peculiar to old age; but it must give them pain to see their comfortless parents, and to hear their murmurs and complaints. The want of piety in old people is a great evil to themselves and to others. How happy is the family, where the aged pious parents command the esteem, the love, and the attention of the whole household! But how unhappy is the family, where the aged parents have not the love of God or man in them, and are perpetually murmuring, and complaining, and pining away, under an insupportable load of guilt and misery! By this contrast, we may see what a peculiar ornament piety is in old people. It is more precious than rubies, and all the things that can be compared with it. It is a pearl of great price. It is a treasure on earth, and a treasure laid up in heaven. It is a fountain of life, and a lasting source of happiness in health and in sickness, in prosperity and in adversity, under the decays of nature, and in the hour of death. Whoever wishes to see many days, and reach old age, and obtain a crown of glory, let him walk in the way of righteousness, and give his heart and life to God.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. It appears from the estimate which has been made, that there are many more old people, than they and others are apt to think. Old age begins so soon after the meridian of life, and comes on so gradually, that many think they are young, and are thought to be young, while they are really in a strict and proper sense, not young but old. Besides, almost every person desires to be young rather than old, and therefore is unwilling to know and realize that he has passed the meridian of life, and is descending to old age, with great but insensible rapidity. How many are there who have passed the meridian of life; are above fifty, or above sixty, or above seventy, and several above eighty! But are they generally disposed to number their days aright, and take their proper place among the aged? Would not some, who have hoary heads, contradict the testimony of their eyes, and deny that they belong to any class of old people? But would it not be wiser for them to consider their latter end, and realize how fast and how near they are approaching to it? This would lead them to form a more just estimate of life, and of all the enjoyments and prospects of life. This would lead them to read and hear what God says to the aged, with seriousness and self-application. And this would lead them to set their houses and their

souls in order, and to stand in the posture of servants waiting for the coming of their Lord.

2. If gray hairs are a natural as well as a moral ornament to old people, then they ought always to be treated with respect. Gray hairs are a plain indication, that those who have them, have lived a long time in the world, have endured the labors, the burdens, and the numerous evils of life, and have been spared and employed by God, to answer some wise and valuable purposes, in respect to their own and future generations. An old patriot, an old valiant general, an old faithful soldier, and every old parent and old man, ought to be respected, whether pious or not. All old people have served and suffered in the world, and done something in God's view, for the benefit of mankind, and therefore have a claim to their respect, on account of their age. This respect, God has expressly required to be paid to the aged. "Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honor the face of the old man, and fear thy God." God has likewise manifested his awful displeasure against those who treated the aged and pious prophet with contempt. But the strongest obligation lies upon children to treat their aged parents with respect and veneration. God expressly commanded the children of Israel, "to honor their father and mother, that their days might be long on the land which he gave them." There is no virtue, I believe, so commonly and visibly rewarded in this life, as filial obedience and respect to parents. Nor on the contrary, is there any sin so commonly and visibly punished in this life, as disobedience and disrespect to parents. "The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it." Parents, on account of their age, their authority, their protection, their tender affection, and anxious cares for their children, lay them under sacred obligations to pay them filial love, obedience, and respect. The mutual relation between parents and children is very intimate, and their mutual affections ought to be sincere and lasting; and they are almost always so, on the side of parents, but not always so on the side of children. It is a rare thing indeed, that parents despise, or desert their children under any circumstances whatever; but it is too often seen, that children will disown, or neglect, or despise, or desert their parents, and especially in old age, and in circumstances of sickness, poverty and distress. It is for this reason, probably, that God has more strictly and repeatedly charged children to love, reverence, and obey their parents, than he has charged parents to love and regard the interest and happiness of their children. God guards human nature by his com-

mands, on its weakest side. He knows that the affections of parents towards their children are stronger than the affections of children towards their parents. Accordingly he lays the stronger obligations on children to be kind, tender, obedient, and respectful to their parents, especially if they are infirm, poor, afflicted, and bowing under the weight of old age.

3. As piety is the peculiar ornament of old people, so the want of it is a peculiar blemish in their character. Childhood and youth are vanity. Manhood is enterprising and aspiring. The want of piety in these stages of life is so common, that it is but little noticed. In the next and more serious stages of life, after men have seen the vanities of the world, experienced the reverses of fortune, and found themselves failing in corporeal and intellectual vigor and activity, and hastening towards old age, if they have not reached it, common sense says it is time for them to seek and secure the one thing needful. And if they then neglect to embrace and practice religion, it is a visible blemish in their character. It argues a vain mind, a hard heart, a stupid conscience, and an unwise disregard to their future and eternal happiness. It demonstrates, that they are, in the sense of Scripture, fools. They have eyes, but they see not. They have ears, but they hear not. They have hearts, but they feel not their moral obligations to God and to themselves. And is it not a blemish in the character of rational creatures, to act irrationally? This blemish is more visible and more reproachful in aged, than in other sinners. They have had line upon line, and precept upon precept, concerning their duty, their danger, and their guilt. They cannot say that the world has allowed them, as it has allowed young people, to neglect religion. Permit me to hold up to view a father who is fifty, or sixty, or seventy, or nearly eighty years old, and who has remained graceless and prayerless, until he is just dropping into the grave. Is not the want of piety in such a person a great blemish in his character, whether he be rich or poor, learned or unlearned? See another man who has passed through all the different stages of life, and arrived at the last, and who is still profane, intemperate, stupid, prayerless, and tottering over the grave. Is not the want of piety a great blemish in his character? All young people wonder at old sinners, whether they are openly vicious or not. Let every sinner look at his character and then at his age. What are you? And where are you? Are you impenitent sinners? And are you on the brink of eternity? Is it not time for not a few to ask themselves such pertinent, solemn, and interesting questions? Are not many of you, before you are aware, old people? And are you not exhibiting the want of piety, before the eyes of the

world, which spreads a blemish over all your natural excellences?

4. Since piety is a peculiar ornament to old people, it is very unwise to neglect obtaining it early in life. Piety is a beauty in the young, as well as in the old. It lays the only solid and permanent foundation for peace, happiness, and usefulness in every stage of life. None become truly happy, and virtuously useful, before they become pious. They must give their hearts before they give their lives to God. They are by nature totally destitute of holiness, and under the entire dominion of a depraved, selfish, sinful heart, and unfit for any duty towards God and man. They are dead in trespasses and sins. They must repent, become reconciled to God, and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and walk in the way of righteousness, in order to become truly pious. This is a duty which they have no right to neglect, and which it is their wisdom immediately to perform. Those who have worn the ornament of piety in old age, have generally become pious in their early days. Joseph was a pious youth. Moses was a pious youth. David was a pious youth. Samuel was a pious youth. Timothy was a pious youth. It seems that most of those who have ever become pious, have become pious in the morning of life. It is not only sinful, but hazardous for the young to put off the concerns of their souls to the decline of life and old age. It is uncertain whether their lives will be spared; and if they are spared, the longer they delay, the more their consciences will be stupified, the more their hearts will be attached to the world, and alienated from God, and opposed to every thing of a holy and religious nature. This you may learn from your own unhappy experience, and from the conduct of those more advanced in life. If you wait for a more convenient season, you will probably continue to wait, to wait, to wait, till God will wait no longer, and put you beyond the reach of mercy. You may now think that the want of piety is no blemish in your character, but sooner than you expect, it may be so. Though you are now young, you will soon be old, and feel the infirmities, burdens, and accumulated evils of old age; which, without piety, may sink you in gloom, despondency, and incurable wretchedness. Can you bear the thought of losing your health, strength and activity, and becoming blind, or deaf, or decrepit, or helpless, without the supports and consolations of piety? It most seriously concerns you now in the vigor of your days, to remember your Creator, "while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them." Though you may escape sickness, accidents, disappointments, bereavements, and many infirmities,

burdens, and trials, which others meet with in the course of life, yet you cannot escape old age, or death. Time will strip you of every thing, unless you choose that good part which cannot be taken from you.

5. If piety be a peculiar ornament to old people, then aged saints have great reason to be thankful to God for what he has done for them. They were once young, vain, stupid, thoughtless, prayerless; but God in sovereign mercy arrested their attention, fastened conviction on their conscience, and turned them from darkness to light and from sin to holiness, while he left others of the same age and of the same character to pursue their course to a wretched old age, or cut them down in the morning of life and sent them into a miserable eternity. Such distinguishing mercies call for distinguishing gratitude and praise. Aged saints cannot look upon their past lives before and after they received the grace of God in truth, without seeing, that it has been of the Lord's mercies that they have not been consumed, and fixed in a state of everlasting alienation and separation from God and from all good. David, in his old age, had such humiliating views of himself, and such grateful views of the special and distinguishing grace of God towards him. This is his humble and grateful language: "Thou art my hope, O Lord God: thou art my trust from my youth. By thee have I been holden up from the womb; thou art he that took me out of my mother's bowels: my praise shall be continually of thee. I am as a wonder unto many: but thou art my strong refuge. Let my mouth be filled with thy praise and with thy honor all the day. Cast me not off in the time of old age, forsake me not when my strength faileth." Aged saints ought to renounce the world, and become dead to the vain and trifling scenes and objects and pursuits of this momentary life, and spend the residue of their days in praise, retirement, and devotion. All things conspire to make them serious, devout and grateful. The trials they have experienced, the blessings they have enjoyed, the dangers they have escaped, the decays of nature, and their increasing infirmities of body and mind, as well as the near prospects of eternity, drive them to God and religion for consolation and support. This has been the manner in which aged saints have spent their last days. Good old Barzillai, though rich and affluent, and invited to join in the splendid entertainments of a prince's court, declined the royal invitation, and rather chose to retire to domestic solitude and devotion. And who can say he acted out of character or made an unwise choice? Simeon the aged, the just, and the devout, patiently and prayerfully waited for the consolation of Israel, and for his own speedy and joyful departure out of the world.

And the pious Anna spent the last days of her very long life in devout and religious exercises, to prepare herself for death and eternity. Such examples deserve the imitation of all aged christians, whose characters, professions and peculiar circumstances, imperiously call upon them to wait submissively and prayerfully for their appointed change.

6. It appears from what has been said, that aged saints ought to be willing to die. They have enjoyed much good, suffered many trials, lost nearly all their former relatives and friends, are left alone in the world, and all things tend to draw their attention to death and eternity; and they have no plea to make for the protraction of life. There was a time in life when David could pray to God and say, "Take me not away in the midst of my days." Every aged christian has more reason to say to God, "I would not live alway; Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace according to thy word." Death in itself is the king of terrors, and opens into an unseen and untried state of existence, which the most devout and aged christian may well contemplate with solemnity and awe, and tremble to launch into the boundless ocean of eternity. And though he is weary of the evils of life, yet all his tender ties to the world are not entirely dissolved. He has persons and objects, and interests to leave, which he ought to regard with pious solicitude and concern. He may be "in a strait betwixt two," a desire to live, and a desire to die. But in his old age, when his exertions and usefulness are failing, he ought to have a prevailing, though submissive desire to die. It argues too great attachment to the world, and too little preparation for death, in aged christians, not to be willing to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. It becomes them no longer to mix with the world, but to retire in solitude, and prepare their unprepared hearts for the solemn scenes before them. God has carried them even to old age, to give them an opportunity to perform the great and last act on the stage of life to the honor of religion, and for the consolation and benefit of those whom they leave behind.

7. The peculiar character and situation of aged christians call for their serious and particular attention to every instance of mortality, whether of the young or of the old. When they see others cut down in the morning of life, or in the midst of their days, enjoyments and hopes, their death calls upon them to recognize, with peculiar gratitude, the mercy of God in preserving their lives in the midst of the arrows of death, which have been constantly flying around them, and causing multitudes to fall on their right hand and on their left. When they see their aged cotemporaries taken away while they are still left, their death

admonishes them, that there is but a step between them and the grave. Though it may look strange, yet it is undoubtedly true, that old age often brings on apathy or insensibility, with respect to the awful event of death. The young are generally more sensibly affected with any instance of mortality than the aged, who have been in deaths oft, and seen many of the dying and the dead. They are like veteran soldiers, who have been so familiar with death, that it has lost all its terror. But aged christians ought not to permit such apathy and insensibility in respect to death, which they have still to experience. They ought to feel more indifferent to other scenes and objects than other men, but not to death, which is just closing their probationary state, and fixing their condition for eternity.

END OF VOL. II.